



BMMC Rider Training

The Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge - Long Distance Riding



LESSONS LEARNED

On June 20, 2010 the Hoka Hey ride began. It was billed as a 7000 mile challenge where 1000 Harley motorcycles would travel from Key West, FL to Homer AK. We were told we'd be on mostly secondary roads, few, if any, dirt roads, and we had 14 days to complete it. Numerous other restrictions/ rules of engagement/ instructions were laid out so you understood what you were getting into before "kickstands up" in Key West. Maps with directions to the next checkpoint were handed to you as you reached each checkpoint. And no outside help or electronic gadgetry was allowed (e.g. GPS, radar detector, etc.) so you had to have a map and a compass to get around. Oh, and you had to camp by your bike every night. As it turned out, the word "challenge" was an understatement.

Judy Wagner and I had a chance to experience the ride of a lifetime. Along the way we had ample opportunity to learn new things about ourselves and our experiences. What follows are a few of the *Lessons Learned* for us.

Camping:

- Minimum requirement for bike camping: tent, bedroll, ground cloth, sleeping pad. Nice to have: pillow, insect spray.
- Wal*Marts allow camping/RVs in their parking lots overnight (no charge).
- Always use a ground cloth beneath your tent. It gives the tent an extra protective layer and will extend the tent's life 10x fold.
- Before setting up your tent do a good preflight of the area for sprinkler heads and dog walking paths.

Navigation:

- Stay mentally oriented on where you are and the route.
- Have a detailed road map and know how to read it. A GPS is nice but you still need to know where you're going in the event of failure.



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- Brush up on your compass reading skills. At the very least know that the sun rises in the East and sets on the other side.
- Be ready for quick turns.

Motorcycle:

- Only pack what you need, not what you think you might need.
- If either tire tread is less than $2/32$ " (the exact distance from the tip of Abe's head to the rim of a penny) then it's time to change it.
- Check your tire pressure and oil level at least once every other day. Do it before you roll in the morning while the tires are still cool.
- Make sure your saddlebags are closed and secure before you leave each stop.
- Carry a small plastic bottle of "Octane Booster". Mixing 1/2 ounce into a full 5 gallon tank of regular gas will make it act like premium.
- Clean your windshield and visor regularly.
- If the morning is "chilly" (e.g. $<70^{\circ}$) start off wearing your electric clothing, connected and on. You can always shed later.
- Practice riding on gravel roads.
- Practice turning around on two-lane roads.
- Learn how to negotiate potholes with slow speed turns.
- If your bike wants to drift to one side or the other when you take your hands off the grips, it's probably due to one saddlebag being heavier than the other. Stop and redistribute. The heavy one is on the side the bike drifts to.
- Never ride past your fatigue limit. You endanger not only yourself but whoever else is on the road.
- Riding at night is more dangerous than riding in the daylight.





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On The Road:

- Contact your credit card companies *before* you leave and tell them you are going on a trip so they don't cancel your cards when they see transactions from all over.
- Start off early in the morning. The weather is usually better and you can get the bulk of your day's ride out of the way by noon.
- Start looking for a gas station around 125 miles and stop when you can. Limiting your time in the saddle to no more than two hours at a time will greatly reduce your daily fatigue factor.
- Some signs lead you to believe that gas is close, not necessarily so.
- Make sure your exit has an "on ramp" too, to reenter the highway.
- At each gas stop eat a small energy snack and rehydrate. Get into a routine and try to be back on the road within ten minutes.
- There is a good chance that you'll attract flies whenever you stop. They love to eat fresh dead bugs on your windshield.
- Put your rain suit on *before* the rain starts.
- Tip generously.
- Carry something to defend yourself with that is easily accessible while sitting on the bike (e.g. small bat, knife, firearm, pepper spray, etc.).
- Don't be a straggler. Don't make others have to wait for you.
- Carry and use a SPOT personal GPS tracker in the event of an emergency.
- Learn to ride in the rain without dampening your spirits.
- Have your cell phone with you so you can contact your riding partner in the event of a separation.
- If you have a CB, use it. Highly recommended for long distance riding.
- Give a spare key to your motorcycle to your riding partner, and vice





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versa.

- Have your camera ready at all times (maybe on a lanyard around your neck). You never know when that Kodak moment will come.
- When encountering numerous wildlife on the road, stop and don't move. Do not blow your horn or rev your engine. Allow them to move away.
- If a deer/elk/moose jumps out in front of you with little time to react, aim for their rear legs. The idea is that you're hoping they continue in the direction they're headed.
- The most dangerous time on the highway for animal encounters is sunrise and sunset, + or - an hour. These are their usual feeding times.
- Keep in mind that wildlife can run a lot faster than you think. (Antelope- 61mph; Elk/Moose- 45mph; Bison- 35mph; Bear- 30mph; Deer- 30mph)
- Hungry animals are more aggressive than full ones. Nice bear.
- Bee stings, no matter where they are, linger for at least two days before they go away.
- All McDonalds and Starbucks have free Wi-Fi.
- Having an audio input (in the background) to your headset or speakers can make the ride be more enjoyable, and go faster.

Self:

- A good attitude and sense of humor will get you through most anything.
- If "Plan A" isn't working, make sure you have a "Plan B" to switch to.
- You don't know your endurance limits until you really test them.
- Sometimes it's OK to turn off your cell phone.
- Serious riding requires serious concentration. Try to minimize outside distractions.

