

I want to go Rally/Touring

Part 3 – Camping

An occasional series intended for the new rider or current rider who wants to take up motorcycle rally/touring. It is not a definitive on how or what to do, rather provide you with a starting point to get out on the road, track or trail.

Disclaimer

Product and brand names are likely the ones I have used or are using now but otherwise representative of the concept. There will be cheaper, equal or more expensive alternatives in the marketplace and therefore not a recommendation. Look around and talk with others on their experiences.

Arrival

Having made your grand entrance to the rally in the 'attack stance' on your GS or casually seated if riding anything else you will have parked and greeted attending staff, paid for your rally badge and purchased a handful of raffle tickets before preparing to ride and set up camp. Try not to drop your bike whilst powering away across the grass in an impressive show of riding skill.

Your Tent Site

No need to bore you with things you should remember from Scouts or Guides, but avoid camping under dead trees, on top of ant nests and in divots or gullies likely to fill with water when it rains, say like Karuah. Leeches start high and travel downhill. Your time is better spent finding out who snores louder than you do and guessing the direction the smoke and ash will come from any campfires.

Tents

I will start that price can/does make a difference, but importantly for tents, this also applies to longevity and your protection against the weather. Having seen tents left behind after one night's camp and owned others still serving 30 years on you can expect to see a big range of prices for similar looking tents.

New to the game? As you are on a BMW leave the Army *hoochie* to KTM and Swags to the cruiser crowd and get yourself an n+1 sized tent. By the time you drag your riding gear, helmet, tank bag and assorted goods into the tent, you will be thanking me. Boots will fit in your vestibule.

Rider plus pillion means a 3 or 4 person tent weighing ~1.2kg for each person in the hiking tent category. The fairer and more tolerant amongst us may well draw the line at getting dressed standing outside of the tent or having to lie down in the tent. Whereas those



Figure 1 - Mont Moondance™ Sahara Tent

crusty old-timers, who ride by themselves, do so deliberately, allowing them the luxury of a tent 220cm tall that they can walk into and hobble out of. Allow 2+kg/rated person.

Most tents suitable for rallying (aka hiking) are 120cm tall. Aluminium poles are the hallmark of better quality and look for something with two side entrances and vestibules (to get in/out). Tunnel tents, those with end entrances are really for the hard core (as in weather), worms and snakes. Fitted tent footprints or groundsheets will reduce the risk of damage to the tent floor; tuck the edge in underneath the fly. Why motorcyclists choose to carry and use swags remains a mystery to me.

Look for a tent that has a double skin (waterproof and separate nylon/mesh layer), as these will keep you dry and condensation free and keep the bugs out at Karuah.

My current tent is a Mont Moondance, but you will see Lone Rider c/w bike port, Oztrail many other tent brands at the site. You only appreciate how many tent brands there are by rallying.

Sleeping Mat

Easy, go to a speciality camping shop and test lie an Exped Mat (<http://www.exped.com/australia/en>). I recommend the down filled vs synthetic models due to weight but one of personal preference. Then look at the price, ouch, but revisit the tent section for reassurance. These really are good.



Still feeling the ground? Really, then you have inflated incorrectly. Then why not add a camp cot? Helinox (<https://www.helinox.com.au/camp-stretchers>) and other companies making lightweight adventure gear sell cots (stretchers) made of aircraft alloy tube that pack small and lightweight. You will still need something (mat) to insulate you from the ground and lying on your sleeping bag will not work (see the next section).

Sleeping Bag

Only one real choice of fill here, goose/duck down for warmth, weight and compactness. Add one more temperature band to where you will be sleeping; I would suggest a-5oC rating of you rally south of Sydney, inland or higher parts of Australia (Kosciuszko, Alpine, Casper, Thunder, Winter and Autumn Leaf rallies). A silk liner will not only make you snuggly but also keep you 2-5oC warmer and your sleeping bag cleaner. Store your sleeping bags dry and uncompressed. Sleeping bags work by loft (thickness) trapping air, when you compress

them – lie on them, the bottom half compresses, has less loft and less warm, so you will be looking for a mat. Go ask the dog outside.

Camp Chair

I watched a You Tube global traveller throw his bag of clothes down on the ground and rest his back against the front wheel of his bike before proclaiming ‘chair done’. Really? Having sat on the ground, rocks, logs, 3-legged stools and folding X leg chairs graduated to the Kermit Chair (<https://www.kermitchair.com/>), simply the most compact and comfortable folding chair you will see...along with the Helinox Camp Chair (<https://www.helinox.com.au/lightweight-camping-chairs/camp-chair>).

The Kermit chair
www.kermitchair.com



Helinox Camp Chair
www.helinox.com.au

Equal in merit and style, I have both and up until Helinox bought out the ‘Camp Chair’ would have said the Kermit pipped it. Helinox Original Chair benefits include packed size and weight, but tricky to get out of as the night progresses but then you are closer to the ground. The Kermit with its sturdy armrests assist in this regard and has optional leg extensions – really a must, when ordering. Both have the option of cup holders. Whilst the Helinox can sink into soft ground, they offer accessories to mitigate this and come with printed assembly instructions inside the bag. The novice can assemble a Kermit Chair 8+ different ways providing the seasoned hand a good hour entertainment whilst he/she sits back and consumes two cans of rehydration fluid.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and Kermit and Helinox certainly have their fair share. Whilst the price may dissuade you, the quality of materials, chair comfort and longevity will serve you well into the future. Another case of try one out if you need convincing.

Until next time and rally cooking and eating, ride safe.

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