

I want to go rally/touring

Part 2 – riding gear

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 using now but otherwise representative of the concept. There will be cheaper, equal or more expensively priced and other alternatives in the marketplace and therefore not a recommendation. Look around and talk with others, but definitely try them on or out.

ATGATT, All The Gear All The Time.

Helmets

My first helmet would have done Ned Kelly proud, made of fibreglass, heavy and with a narrow view port – it served me well, including through the crash that saw it written off and replaced. Head intact to my mother's joy until I went and brought another motorbike and new helmet.

There are Open, Full/Flip face, Adventure or Moto style variants. You will have a preference and often more than one helmet to match the number and variants of motorcycles you own and ride, but medical professionals only ever advocate the full-face variants.

There is a saying "a \$10 helmet for a \$10 head" and whilst you can spend from <\$200 to >\$1500 for a helmet your helmet will be (1) new, (2) have an AS/NZS 1698 sticker (yes, there is parallel importing but for now), (3) fit properly and (4) you will look after it. If this is your first or new type of helmet, get someone in-store help to make sure you have the right shape and fit helmet for your head!



Open Face

Adv & Moto Style

Full & Flip Face

Figure 1 - Helmet Variants

While we are here, AS/NZS 1698 does not allow for helmet attachments like cameras, lights etc. and picked up in the Australian Road Rules. So you may end up having a chat with the Police under the "do as I say not what we do" scenario. Better off to just unclip your accessory put it in your pocket, look contrite and put it back later on.

There is a price vs quality correlation. A quality helmet will fit better, be made of lighter material, have better quality liner (eg: removable and washable or have adjustment cheek pads) whilst generally quieter and subject your head/neck to less turbulence on the road.

I have tested a few helmets out on bitumen and gravel surfaces and all performed well but after a big knock, cut the strap off and throw it in the bin. They all seem to have a polystyrene liner (the crash absorbing part) between outer glossy shell and furry liner that goes hard, shrinks/compresses or cracks with time or when dropped or after bouncing down the road. Helmets are consumable like tyres – they wear out – and just another cost to our sport. Is your head really only worth \$10?

Funnily, some insurers have a separate funds bucket for riding gear and accessories to your comprehensive motorcycle insurance bucket, and encourage you to replace damaged protective gear. So check this out when you are next renewing insurance.

Gloves

Don't need to wear gloves? Then try rubbing your knuckles across the ground as fast as you can or remember what touches the ground first when you trip over. Now repeat that at 60+ kmh. There ends the lesson.

In ye olden days, winter meant heavy gloves with little tactile feel and summer saw the use of wafer thin leather or synthetic mesh gloves. I continue to see riders wear rigger and welding gloves; why is this so?

Modern gloves come in as many variants as helmets and jackets, so you will likely have and/or carry different kinds. The advent of heated grips means lighter gloves are an option for some and me all year round. Whilst the outer shell and palm continue to be the province of kangaroo skin, synthetic backing, liners and formed plastic knuckle protectors abound. Zips and or Velcro tabs will keep them on your hands and there are styles to suit the adventure rider, day rider and racer. You may laugh at the latest addition of the rubber 'wiper' blade on the index finger – until you have a pair and use it.

Waterproof and gloves is not a term that goes together that well and probably has as much to do with all the cut shapes and sewn joints. If this is a problem, there are plastic over gloves available – but do not look to them for tactile feel



BMW GS Glove



BMW Twin Layer Glove



BMW Race Glove

Figure 2 - Glove variants

Jackets & Pants

Ahh, the smell of Belstaff waxed cotton in high summer and everything covered in black wax. Fortunately times and materials have moved forward. As this is the Touring Club, I will limit this section to touring jackets, having four jacket variants in the seasonal cupboard.

Today textile touring jackets and pants typically comprise removable layers of inner warm and waterproof with built in armour and variable venting options. Priced from a low ~\$300 through to BMW Rallye Jacket at \$1300 (high season).

Good quality riding gear will save you a lot of pain in a crash, may enable you to simply dust off and ride away and if you decide to visit the ER department score some empathy – they still do not like motorcyclists, but we are good for business.

Exposed to the elements, your all-in-one riding suit lifespan is determined by exposure to the elements including ultra violet – sun, rain and abrasion. Therefore, someone's \$200 jacket only ever worn in summer and to three rallies a year may well be waterproof after 10 years. Whereas your \$2500 integral suit only lasted 3 years but you daily commute, are a regular GS & TS Safari participant in between 20 rallies including the Border Run and alternate year Off Centre Rally.

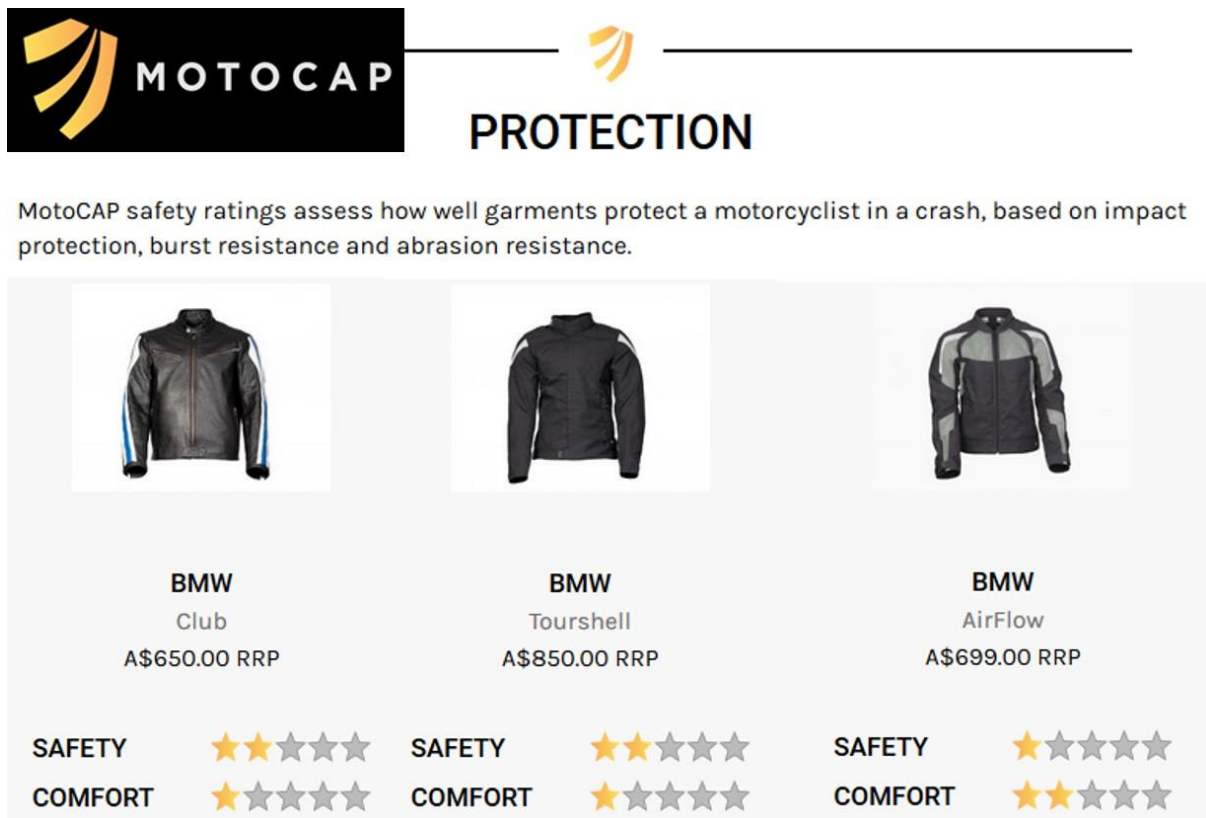


Figure 3 - Motocap Motorcycle Jacket Ratings

Like tyres, helmets and gloves, jackets and pants wear out.

Trivia: Having been scrapped off the road and transported to medical care, you will be pleased to know that the ER department is attune to the cost of riding gear and if you are conscious invite you to take your gear off (with assistance) before they cut it off.

They do practise the blood rule and/or if unconscious may well find all your gear cut off and belongings thrown in the bin. For one person I know, this included their blood-covered phone; I thought a phone, wallet and keys may have warranted a sealed specimen bag, but no, to the hazmat bin it went. Have you backed up your phone lately?

The NSW government and partner agencies have set up Motocap to test and score motorcycle riding gear, check it out <https://www.motocap.com.au/>. They do not or have tested all products available in the marketplace, but will provide you a guide on brand, price and functionality.

Finally, consider having separate riding gear including undergarments and @ camp gear. There is nothing better than after a days riding to get your helmet, jacket, pants and boots off and change into rally/pub wear or go for a swim at the Club's Karuah River Rally. Having made camp, hang your gear up and let it air/dry out and if you are wet, change into dry clothes for the camp even if this means putting wet gear back on the following day.

Boots

Sheepskin flying boots anyone? Fantastic when new; warm, comfortable and waterproof. They even allowed me to walk again after coming between my 3-day-old Honda CB750FA and a Volvo ☹ along with the assistance of an orthopaedic surgeon and month stay in-hospital. With time however, they smell, get loose and flop around when walking.

Modern boots come in a range of types and styles depending on your use. I will dot point a few features but recommend boots that extend above the ankle to mid-calf. There are a host of brands and retail outlets so look around to find 'your' best fit.

Road: Leather or mix of leather & synthetic stretch panels with zipper and Velcro cover flap. Regular use of leather protectant will keep them in top condition and aid in their softening and shaping to your foot. Boot toe sliders are under no risk from me, but you can get replacements. Cheaper brands have a more generic fit and you will get a wet foot, the more expensive brands will have a taper fit, waterproof liner membrane and be more comfortable if you are planning on walking.

Adventure: Atypical leather, synthetic, hard plastic and two or more buckles to ensure a secure and best fit. If you are planning on walking and riding, then shop around as with some brands you can walk all day whilst others will not get you to the servo counter. Go up in price for more features, better quality materials and increased likelihood of having dry feet.

There are rubber over boots available and if you are trying to get your wet weather pants on; try putting a plastic bag over your foot or foot + boot.



BMW' City Boots



Alpinestar Road Boots



Forma Adventure Boots

Figure 4 - Motorcycle Boots

Staying warm/cool

Layers are your friend here or have you succumbed to the heated vest phenomena or is that a clique? And remember the charging cord as the batteries have a 6-hour span.

The choice of synthetic or merino undergarments is a matter of personal preference but perform better if a firm fit and 'wick' moisture away from your skin – to heat or cool.

Followed by socks, shirt, pants and jumper. From experience, synthetic materials are easily rinsed and dry in no time. Wool looks more stylish and a must for coastal stops, flannelette is okay for the hinterland, Alps and interior.

Neck warmers and bandanas. A matter of personal preference. Touring jackets will often have a collar, day/road jackets less so but in either case, these will afford protection against insects and slow that cold wet trickle of rain down your back. On hot days, when wet provide a useful means of cooling the neck and blood vessels.

Top layer. See jackets and pants, but all the modern touring jackets have vent zippers and removable waterproof and warm inner layers.

Hydration

A short note on hydration. You will always be losing moisture when riding and more so if off through your breath, sweat or simple evaporation/transpiration. Do not under estimate the fatigue factor from riding whilst dehydrated in hot or cold conditions and do not leave it to the first beer at the rally before you re-hydrate. Options include Camelback worn bladders or take bottles of water in the pannier.

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