

Be sure to let our advertisers know you saw their ad in the Free Riders Press

Group Riding

There will come a time when you're invited to join a group ride. You may even organize one yourself. It's a great way to meet people and share your experience with those above you or below you on skill level. Group rides also offer safety in numbers. That is, when you're out exploring the countryside and you have a mechanical problem or (gasp!) an unintentional dismount, you have friends there to get you rolling again or call for help. Safety in numbers also means that you have more of a presence on the road: you're more visible to other drivers as a group and command a little more respect than a lone rider.

What to Expect

Looking through the risk-averse window of reality, we also see that the perks that make group rides great can also wreck 'em. With a "variety pack" of riders, you'll also get a variety pack of attitudes and varying levels of experience and ability. For every rider who thinks gloves and a helmet are essential for a good ride, there's a rider who thinks that "All that crap just gets in the way" and takes away from the enjoyment. For every rider who thinks that American iron is the only way to go, there's a rider out there who thinks American-made bikes are too heavy, slow, and unreliable to be worth the big price tag. For every rider dressed like a pro with the skills and experience to match, there'll be a rider with a great bike and expensive gear who's never ridden more than 50 miles at a shot and wouldn't know countersteering if it sprang up out of the bushes and chewed a hole through his or her expensive leather pants.

Instead of preparing you for every possibility (or eventuality) of group riding, let's look at it from a more positive perspective. How would you do it? Let's set our expectations in reverse, and evaluate group rides from our own perspective.

Know the rules.

Every group, if they're smart, will lay down at least a few ground rules at the start of the ride regarding speed, passing, space cushioning, etc. Decide what you think is safest and remind the group that they're your guests; bad behavior will not be tolerated. If someone wants to ride like a complete wanker, they can do it without the group.

Ride your own ride. Stay within your limits. Check your ego at the door. Regardless what



the rules are, you are still the only one responsible for your safety. Do NOT fall into the trap of trying to keep up with a fast group to impress them. Ride at the speed at which you're comfortable and in control. Most riders familiar with group riding are far more impressed by those who know their limits than those who toss them out the window—and crash.

Stay out of your mirrors.

Your goal is to have fun and ride safely. You can't do that when you're constantly staring into your rearview mirrors to see if A) a faster rider wants to pass you, or B) a slower rider has been left in the dust. Concentrate on the road ahead and check your mirrors only every seven seconds or so. And just glance—don't stare. If you need to stare, pull over and stop before you do.

Pat Hahn is the author of *How to Ride a Motorcycle, Ride Hard Ride Smart*, and a co-author of *Track Day Handbook*. He lives in south Minneapolis. You can e-mail Pat at readerresponse@hedonistic-enthusiasm.com or visit his Web site at www.debaucheryball.org.

[PHOTO CAPTION]

If a group makes a two-second-following-distance rule, remember that two seconds is a minimum following distance. There's no reason to ride in a rigid formation, no matter what the "road captain" may tell you. If the group requires a formation that you think is unsafe, find another group. Give yourself the space that you need to ride, and never follow another rider closer than he or she is following the rider in front of them. Photo courtesy Evans Brasfield.





9th ANNUAL CANT AFFORD STURGIS



New Location
Josie's Hiway & Campgrounds
N.15945 Hwy 80
Necedah Wisconsin

August: 4th/5th&6/2006
Gate Opens At Noon Friday August 4th

Admission \$40.00
\$20.00 Friday Day Pass/\$30.00 Saturday Day Pass

Also New This Year Thursday Night Pre Party

Admission Includes
Weekend Camping, Free Beer, Soda, Coffee & Saturday Pig roast
Music, Vendors, Bike Games & Much More
More Bands, More Music

Featuring
Kirk Netzel, American Biker, Ferris Wheeler, Genhis Kahn
Thursdays Project, D.J. Jay Requests
Much more music

Saturday breakfast brunch 8:00 Am Till Noon
At Wilderness Inn, also Motel accommodations At Wilderness Inn

Saturday Morning Poker Run Starts at 10:00 Am
First Aid station: Run by: First Aid Responder

Further info: Call Tito Bopp At 715-323-1633
Website: www.geocities.com/titoboppones



No PETS
MUST BE 21



Neinfest

Sat. July 8th 11:00-5:00

Bikini Bike Wash - Cold beer - Great Food
Music by Tuck Pence
Vendors, exhibits, Drag Specialties Rep.
Lots and Lots of Fun

Neinfeldt's Cycle
4811 Plover Rd., Wisconsin Rapids, WI
715-423-1903