

# 5 Tips for Riding Your Motorcycle in the Cold

Even though winter is here, that doesn't mean you can't get out for a nice ride on your motorcycle. But staying warm when the weather gets cold can be a challenge for motorcyclists and roads that look safe can sometimes surprise you in the shadows. As is true for most motorcycle rides, being prepared makes all of the difference.

**1) Packing Your Bike** Always prepared for the ride. One saddlebag should have all of your wet-weather riding gear (and tools), and the other should have your cold-weather riding gear.

**2) Preparing for the Cold** Knowing more about wind chill will help you prepare for what to wear, and it's not just about the speed of the current wind conditions. For instance, when you're traveling 40 mph, 70 degrees feels like 68. But at the same speed, 40 degrees feels like 27. Sun also makes a big difference, did you know that sunshine makes a difference of 15 degrees in perceived warmth?

**3) Building Warmth in Layers** As your body temperature decreases, so does your ability to think and act quickly. A preoccupation with being uncomfortable can slow your reaction time. Layering your clothing is an essential skill for keeping warm and avoiding those risks. There are many places to get gear designed to build layers. Layering without becoming too bulky to move efficiently is something all motorcyclists strive to master. You need three layers, a wicking layer, a warm layer and a wind-breaking layer. Typically, your leather jacket can act as two of these layers (warmth and wind breaking). The shirt underneath should be specially designed to wick perspiration so you don't end up with a damp shirt that sucks away warmth. Long sleeves will help keep wind from blowing up them, and your gauntlet gloves will aid with that as well. While my leather jacket provides a degree of wind-breaking capacity, when it is particularly chilly my rain jacket adds a layer and helps block the wind. I can add the rain pants with boot protectors if desired. In the saddlebag with warm clothes should also be your thinsulate gauntlet leather gloves, chaps, neck warmer, balaclava, heated vest and hooded sweatshirt.

**4) Heating Your Extremities** Personally, I would not be without heated handle grips. Even with gloves on, they help keep my hands warm. If you keep your hands and the core of your body warm, you will be 75 percent comfortable. You can lose a great deal of body heat from your head and neck area, so a neck warmer and a helmet will help to keep that heat in. Wool socks and a good pair of riding boots will keep your feet warm and dry.

**5) Watching for Slippery Pavement** You need to be extra cautious about riding on pavement that has frost or ice on it. There is no safe way to ride on two wheels when the pavement is icy. Even if the sun is out and the pavement appears dry, you will need to consider shaded areas as potentially dangerous. Coming into a curve and hitting a shaded area with ice can happen without warning, and even the most skilled rider could end up face-down on the pavement. Wet pavement can be slippery, but frost and ice are even more slippery!

**Ride safe and keep the rubber side down.**