

VTR 2017 SURVIVAL GUIDE

Welcome to the VTR 2017 Survival Guide page. Termed Vintage Triumph Register this is our national event that is held yearly in various locations throughout the United States. This event is a time for our members meet and celebrate the passion they have for the Triumph marque. It incorporates a variety of functions ranging from a banquet dinner, a concourse, scenic drives, tech work shops, driving events, auto-crossing, and much more!

Each year, at the VTR Gathering, there are a great many activities for Triumph enthusiasts, and each seems to require its own special bit of preparation. This diversity makes it a challenge to plan and pack for the VTR National. The following tips should make your meet experience more enjoyable.

Packing

Packing a Triumph for an extended trip is an art. My two major considerations are utilizing all available space and providing waterproof storage for your belongings. You can "cheat" by adding space (such as one individual I know who pulls a color-matched trailer with his car), but the waterproofing requires attention to detail. A complicating factor is that I always expect to bring more home than I left with. Nonetheless, there are some packing tricks -- most of which were acquired by watching others.

A useful strategy is to fit the big, non-compressible items in first. Followed with the smaller, more-squish able items. Use soft-sided luggage when possible. If you haven't checked out how your luggage fits in your car, check it now! This will give you time to ponder your packing strategy and, if necessary, purchase new luggage.

For clothing where wrinkles are not a factor, consider using heavy-duty plastic trash bags or zip-lock freezer bags in lieu of conventional luggage. You definitely will want the heavy-duty versions; a Triumph trunk has many small, sharp protrusions that can quickly puncture and tear the light-duty bags. Double-wrapping helps, too.

If you use luggage, but it isn't weatherproof, pre-pack your clothes in two-gallon zip-lock freezer bags.

My full-face racing helmet rides at my elbow between the seats. I make it serve double duty by packing it with crushable items.

If you can manage it, bring a mailing tube. paper items are plentiful at a the event, and this is the only way I know of to get them home in pristine condition.

Tools, Spares & More

Opinions are many and varied on what maintenance items to carry to a national event. Much will depend on your ability and inclination to work on your car in an emergency situation. I have seen Triumph owners bring everything from a can of Fix-A-Flat and a credit card to shop manuals, a full set of electrical spares and enough tools to fill a roll-away. I tend to take a fairly minimalist approach; a small kit that will allow me to patch the car together when the going gets tough (i.e., change a flat or clean the plugs) is all I carry. In other words, I just want to be able to get the bugger going -- if only in limp-home mode.

Tools:

volt meter (cheap and small)

multiple-bit screwdriver

adjustable wrenches

vice grips (locking pliers)

needle nose pliers

wire cutters

forceps (surgical clamp)

file

dental mirror

pocket survival tool (e.g., Leatherman)

1/2-in.-drive breaker bar and a socket sized for the wheel nuts (for bolt-on wheels)

3/8-in.-drive socket set

propane-fueled lighter

sandpaper and emery cloth in assorted grits

oilier (precision instrument oilier, mostly for the generator)

car jack

wheel wrench or hammer (for knock-offs and safety-knock-offs)

torque wrench.

My spares kit:

spare tire

stainless steel lock wire (measured in ft., not lb.)

electrical wire (20+ feet of 12-gauge)

alligator clips (a few in assorted sizes)

duct tape (the good stuff)

electrical tape

2-in.-wide masking tape (the long-duration silver stuff from 3M sells for \$15 a roll and is worth every penny, it sticks great, doesn't leave a residue after staying out in the sun for a month, and is available at boating supply houses)

Associated stuff:

coveralls

tarpaulin/ground cover (helps you stay dry and find dropped parts)

waterless hand cleaner

a quart or two of motor oil (Mobil 1 can be difficult to find on the road).

Safety equipment:

safety glasses

fire extinguisher

first aid kit (to take care of minor maladies, such as headaches, diarrhea, scrapes and burns)

light stick (the 30-minute variety gives a cold, even light that is sufficiently bright for most emergency work)

flashlight

strobe (many chandlers -- i.e., boating suppliers -- sell a combination flashlight/strobe light)

wheel chocks.

The following items are good to have on hand:

lip balm, ear plugs (12 hours of a sport exhaust can be very tiring -- the disposable type are cheap and effective)

travel mug

towel(s) (car cleaner, pillow, ground cover, too many uses to ignore -- every Triumph driver should have at least one in the car at all times)

camera (to record the good times, a bit from an original car, or yourself with a Triumph hero)

business cards, notepad, pen, highlighter and large-tip marker (making contacts and notes can be the most rewarding part of a national event)

books and memorabilia (a national event is a wonderful time to collect autographs)

sun screen and bug spray

wristwatch with alarm and stopwatch (you won't want to miss a thing, and timing laps is interesting)

paperwork (insurance card, part suppliers, vehicle registration -- and log your starting mileage if you have insurance coverage that is mileage-limited)

lots of money (vendors take credit cards, and checks can be useful, but the best deals are cash)

a cellular telephone and a GPS (if you're a gadget person).

Car Preparation

The trip to a national event may be the longest drive of your car's life. It may also be the only time in years that your Triumph has been used in adverse conditions and as daily transportation. While I am not a big fan of carrying spare parts, I do recommend taking some precautions before launching a highly strung sports car on a 1,000-mile journey. Give your car a good look-over with an eye toward extended travel, and try the 10% rule.

The 10% Rule: When pulling a Triumph out of storage or preparing for a long trip, put it through a shakedown test consisting of a series of drives, each approximately 10% of the mileage of the next anticipated drive. As an example, a 1,000-mile excursion to a national meet might involve a series of drives spaced over a week or so. The series of drives would go something like this: a quick trip around the block; several trips around the block totaling a mile or two; a 10-mile circuit of my favorite haunts; a 100-mile drive over hill and dale.

After each excursion, I strongly recommend a thorough check of the car and a cool down. Remember, one of the things that you are trying to accomplish by doing this is to run the car through a series of heat cycles. If you experience any problems, fix them and resume the test drives from the start. Some nay-sayers may assert that such an approach will guarantee that you never go anywhere, but this is not the case. The only national event for which I required alternate (i.e., non-Triumph) transportation was the one where I didn't have enough time to use the 10% rule.

In preparing for a series of national events, I have found a variety of things to be broken on my cars. The following list may be helpful in guiding your car preparation.

Electronic Ignition, points, plugs, condensor

Coil

Ignition Wires

Fan Belt

Carb Float

Fuel Filter

Choke Cable

Fuses

Wiper Blades

Fuel & Brake lines

The Trip

Consider the trip to and from a national event as an extension of your vacation. Prepare yourself and your car for the trip, and then have fun. Travel by secondary highway, enjoy the scenery, attack a corner, and then stop and smell the roses. Let's face it: How often do you get to spend a good part of a day driving your Triumph? Use it as was intended.

For added fun -- and added confidence, if you're skittish about taking a long Triumph drive alone -- consider participating in a caravan. Often, members of a national event local affiliate form contingents for the journey.

Dress

A national event weekend is generally casual, although for some people it runs from semi-formal through racing suits to grease-monkey grunge. Picking the appropriate clothes is easy. The Saturday night awards banquet is mostly coat-and-tie (although casual attire is accepted), while all of the other indoor meals are casual. Dress for safety at the competitive driving events and weather-smart for the rest of the outdoor events.

Be prepared for hot and cold, rain and sun. Items that I have found valuable: wide-brimmed hat with keeper; dark sunglasses with keepers; long-sleeved shirt with collar; silk or light polypropylene long johns (the silk ones pack down into an incredibly small package); bandana; walking shoes (sneakers); single-use rain poncho.

Triumph-related paraphernalia is always appropriate. Many people seem to wear something with a Triumph logo on it at all times during the national event weekend. Remember we will have a period dress contest on the first night of the event. There will be prizes for the couple, man & woman who best represents the period of clothing associated with their car.

General Tips

After you arrive, register and read your registration packet and event book. Highlight the things that are important to you. Check the meet's bulletin board for changes.

Bone up on Triumph and racing history. The arguments are usually way above my head, but it's nice to have an idea of what's going on.

Always wear your badge as it is your identification as a paid participant. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself. If you see a name tag or a Triumph logo on a person, you can be assured that he or she is there to live, breath and talk Triumph. At a restaurant, call your fellow Triumph enthusiast over to share your table.

The National is a big event, and assistance is often needed. Pitch in. Volunteer. Get involved.

Arrive early and leave late. Informal gatherings take place throughout the weekend,

A typical hang-out is the parking lot. If you can't find

anything happening anywhere else, there will usually be someone

hanging around the cars.

There is generally an informal breakfast group at the hotel's restaurant and at least one nearby eatery. Ask around for the de facto hang-out. Usually, the national event crowds tend to congregate at a few places within walking distance of the hotel.

The hotel bar typically gets closed down by a group of Triumph diehards.

When the national event is all over, consider mailing stuff back. Mailing and shipping services have become much easier to find in the last few years.

Events

The following is a brief description of the traditional activities. Read your registration packet, and remember to check the hotel bulletin board for changes and updates to activities and schedules.

Pre-registration and Check In

Pre-registration is the way to go. The only problem is deciding between conflicting events. A good rule of thumb is to do the things that you can't do in your own backyard (e.g., I can autocross every month of the year, but I can't talk to a technical expert very often; at a national event, I would choose to spend my time with the technical folks).

Note your check's number on your registration form and make a photocopy of the whole shebang. Take the photocopy with you to check-in. It's not necessary, but it can help smooth over any registration difficulties.

Order your Triumph apparel early. There is usually a very limited supply of unreserved shirts available at the event. This stuff sells out early, and the post-event supplemental order (if there is one) takes a while to fulfill. Be assured that the organizers do a good job of ensuring that everything is of good quality. I have never bemoaned the fact that I purchased Triumph paraphernalia; however, I have bemoaned opting not to.

The seemingly simple task of on-site registration isn't. Don't do it if you can avoid it; pre-register if at all possible. On-site registration is made complicated by the number of attendees who follow this route and the numerous options available to attendees. Save yourself time, money and aggravation by pre-registering.

Also note: Credit cards are NOT accepted for registration.

Check-in is quick and simple if you: have pre-registered; have your pre-registration package with you; go to the line corresponding to the first letter of your last name; don't make any major changes to your pre-registration.

At registration, remember to also sign up for your Saturday banquet seating. There is usually a poster board showing the tables arranged, write your name(s) on the table you wish to sit at. This is a first-come first-serve sign up. There will be some reserved tables for special guests.

Car Wash

An important, if sometimes rushed, part of the event, the car wash lets you provide some TLC to your mount, usually either sometime during the day Friday or on Saturday morning. Although the event organizers generally provide the basics, well-prepared owners bring those little extras that can help make their cars stand out from the crowd: chamois, towel, detail wax, Squeegee, Armor-All and Rain-X.

Reception

The Wednesday night reception is generally the official kickoff of the event. A hungry, thirsty, enthusiastic crowd attacks heavy any food. Small groups of friends gather. People mill around. Bring pictures of your latest triumph escapade and mingle. There are plans in the works for live entertainment and don't forget the 60s - 70s costume dress contest. You can try and match the clothing period of your car's birthday or just anything from back in the day that you like or own.

Vintage Dress Up Costume Contest

Fellow VTR 2017 attendees. We will have a fun contest on the first night of the event. Prepare yourself to dress in period clothing that matches your car date or close to it. We will have a prize (Local Eatery gift cards) for the best dressed couple and then one each for best dressed woman & man.

Rules are simple, you must be a paid attendee, come to the BBQ reception in your period dress. Clothing must be free of profanity and suitable for a family event. A group of judges will keep an open eye and make their decision by night's end. There will be BBQ, Beer, refreshments and music. If you want to kick up your heels, feel free. Come join the fun and show off your threads.

Contests

Tradition holds that this national event consists of several non-driving, non-Concours contests. They provide recognition and an audience for the creativity of attendees. They can also provoke some lively discussions throughout the weekend.

Every year has a slightly different mix of contests and events. To determine the categories for the upcoming national event, check the pre-event publicity or your pre-registration confirmation material. The most important point to remember is that you have to enter to win. There are usually contests for: Best Photo (people's choice awards for Triumph-related photographs, based on artistic merit and subject matter, with separate categories for large and small photos); Best Model (people's choice awards for Triumph scale models, usually with separate categories for large and small); Best Craft (people's choice awards for non-model, Triumph-related handiworks, arts and crafts); Liars Essay (for those not bringing a Triumph, a contest consisting of an essay -- true or not (the more outrageous, the better) -- explaining why not; originality and humor count, and the winning essay is sometimes read at one of the dinner events); Hard Luck (an award given to the individual experiencing the greatest misfortune en route to the event; the usual procedure is to contact someone at registration to tell your tale of woe); Long Distance (awards given to those who travel the farthest to make it to the event; often, there are several categories, e.g., for trailered, early-model and late-model Triumphs).

Technical Sessions

There are several tech sessions conducted during the event weekend and they run from a half-hour to an hour in length. The sessions vary greatly in topic, quality and quantity, and occasionally more than one is scheduled at the same time, forcing you to choose.

Saturday Concours

It is refreshing to be at a Concours event with knowledgeable Triumph people. Best of all, you will get to see some great cars and some cars with great potential, all at your leisure.

The Concours is typically run by white-gloved inspectors. All of the cars on hand are considered to be automatically entered. There are numerous classes, so your car can compete against cars of similar appearance and vintage. This can be your best opportunity to take home some hardware, and hardware from this event means a great deal.

To get your Triumph ready, start with a clean, well-detailed car. Bring a dust magnet, a little bottle of spray cleaner, some touch-up wax and a towel. (It seems that I have never been to a Concours that didn't run everyone through a mud puddle or over a dusty dirt road to get to the site.) Clean out the junk from your car; at the very least, hide it away. A sharp-looking container with a Triumph logo can't help you in the voting. A well-mounted fire extinguisher can also make the difference of a few votes.

Fill out the supplied placard with a large-tipped felt marker, and then put it in a place where people can readily read it. If you can concoct a good spiel ahead of time, you will be one-up on many of the contestants.

The Concours generally starts late Saturday morning and lasts much of the afternoon. Try to bring your own shade and seating, bug spray and sun screen. All of these items can be at a premium. Be prepared to supply your own drinks and munchies.

In voting, you are dealing with a group of knowledgeable, passionate Triumph people. Think about your voting strategy. With one of the biggest congregations of Triumph cars in the North America, you will have ample opportunity to watch and learn.

Vendor Display

During the Concours, vendors and individuals have plenty of things on sale. So much to see and purchase, and so little time and money. Spend some time meeting those distant telephone voices, flipping through the books that you have contemplated purchasing, and looking at the Triumph trinkets

This is an excellent time to check out aftermarket parts. As a bonus, some interesting prototype parts show up at this event.

A formal Auto Jumble (possibly a contradiction in terms) doesn't take place at all events, but some informal buying and selling of parts and paraphernalia always occur. Bring cash if you want a chance to take home the good stuff.

Board Meeting

This is a once-a-year opportunity to meet the volunteer board members of the sponsoring clubs face to face. The board members very much want to hear your suggestions, opinions and gripes. This takes so little time -- an hour, at most -- so stop by and help out the club by giving your views.

Awards Banquet

This is the weekend's big, most formal meal, with sign in seating at registration. The Concours awards are handed out, special guests are recognized, and most attendees overeat. An honored speaker significantly associated with the Triumph Marque gives the after dinner address, and it is a rare person who doesn't learn something new about the Marque from his presentation. It is often late in the evening before the crowd lets the speaker step down. Even then, the poor fellow often ends up continuing his stories in the hotel bar until the place closes down.

A word concerning appropriate dress for the banquet: For some, this event calls for semi-formal attire. For most, it's coat and tie for the gentlemen and dresses for the ladies. And casual dress is certainly acceptable. Some folks may decide to show up with sandals and shorts. While you will not be tuned away, you might feel uncomfortable seated with others who are well dressed. Now being forewarned, getting dressed up for the dinner can be one of the highlights of the trip.

Autocross

Some folks seem to be more confident of their driving ability than others. In any event, expect a full-day event. The driving classes are set up to provide fair and equitable competition for everyone.

Remember to stop in at a local gas station the night before this event to take care of your fuel requirements and set the air pressure in your tires. The autocross may be scheduled early enough that it is difficult to get these things done the morning of the event.

If you are a novice at autocross, take some time during the preceding day to search out an experienced driver, who can give you car set-up and driving tips.

Drive / Rally

Sometimes this event is simply a tour, other times it includes a gimmick-type rally. In all cases, the roads have been pre-driven to insure that they are suitable for a Triumph.

A navigator equipped with paper and pen is useful if you want to participate in the rally. Bring local and regional maps with you. Those and a GPS with mapping software can be an advantage in finding your way back to the hotel if you get lost or are running late.