



Baggage



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Baggage. Some is removable and some, permanently mounted. Most of us carry too much. Comes in many sizes, shapes, colors, and material. Motorcycle bags. Life baggage. Applies to both.

Permanent or Removable

We are born with a clean slate. Empty bags. Whether we are born with a clean bill of health, with sight, hearing, speech, physical, medical, or mental issues, or baggage starts out empty. Some of our baggage is easily removable by just releasing a few fasteners and some is a bit more difficult to remove by unscrewing some nuts and bolts with special tools. Other baggage is permanently mounted—physical or mental conditions not readily remedied. From day one the empty baggage begins to fill. How full it gets and whether it is cleaned-out or removed is largely up to us and our environment.

Removable baggage is that which we can easily release. We know we have issues but we also know—and act to rid ourselves of—this baggage. I hate numbers. I dislike working with math and don't balance my checkbook. Would you believe I was a math major in college and have a business degree? Go figure. Throughout my life I've struggled to maintain numerical records of many types. At work when I was a department manager and had to manage budgets I had a terrible time with the process. My own records are a mess. I realized early in my adult life that in order to have some semblance of order to my numerical—translated financial—life I

needed help from someone else. This was and still is baggage that I easily release by finding people I trust who are good at or whose business it is to help people manage their financial lives. Just as I easily released the saddlebags on my old Honda Shadow by pressing four quick-release clips, so did I (reasonably) easily release the baggage of disliking numbers and managing finances. The key to being able to easily release removable baggage is to (a.) recognize such baggage exists and identify the components, (b.) realize such baggage does not define you as a person or label you as a success or failure, (c.) identify or acquire the appropriate resources that allow you to release the baggage, and (d.) take action to release it.

Quite a few saddlebags are removable but require special tools to loosen the nuts and bolts that hold the baggage. Some of our issues in life can be overcome but require some special tools to help us release them. I am the only 'child' born to my parents and was raised to feel very special. I grew up without having to share my possessions or myself with any siblings. Consequently I learned to be selfish and possessive. This turned out to be baggage I carried into summer camp and college dormitory living. It was baggage not easily removed since it was ingrained in me from childhood. But with life-skill tools developed through having to live with other people in camp and in school and a desire to overcome my selfishness and possessiveness, I did remove a lot of that baggage. I can't say it has ever been completely released but a great deal

has been over the years. Do not hesitate to explore avenues for self-improvement to acquire special tools you might need to release your not-so-easily-removable baggage from your life.

Permanent baggage is not necessarily negative. There are some gorgeous permanently-mounted bags on bikes—both soft and hard. My Honda ACE Tourer has nice hardbags that I think are wonderful. Most of us are born with—or develop—some baggage in our lives that we have to live with our entire lives. I was born with asthma that has plagued me all my life. It is a permanent yet controllable condition.

Physical or medical conditions and mental health issues can be dealt with either positively or negatively depending on how you choose to deal with them and how you respond to others' reactions and tolerances. My hope is that you choose to handle permanent baggage in a positive manner and find help with doing so if help is needed. Sometimes we need an aftermarket crashbar to protect our permanent baggage from damage or destruction.

Fully-Loaded

I have heard it said that what you carry in your saddlebags or tankbag (or purse or briefcase) says a lot about who you are. Heavens! I hope not for my own sake. Earlier I said we are born with empty bags. From day one our parents or guardians, families, friends, colleagues, teachers, and society slowly fill our bags with 'stuff'. Some of the stuff is positive for us and other is negative. The ratio of each varies by person and life experience. At times throughout our lives we have to stop, take stock of our baggage and decide whether or not we will unload or shift the contents.

Every time I ride I re-evaluate what I carry with me based on whether I'm riding alone or with others, how far I plan to ride, the type of trip I'm taking, the weather

Baggage (continued)

prediction, and the condition of my bike. Throughout my life I've had to stop and take stock of what I'm carrying as baggage and determine whether to act to get rid of that load or keep carrying the extra load. I've had to decide whether I'm carrying an extra burden not necessary to carry or whether I'm carrying essential tools and accessories I will likely use throughout my life. As I've shed some baggage I've gone shopping for new tools and supplies to add based on where I am at any particular point in my life. The baggage filled throughout childhood is changed at adolescence. That baggage is re-evaluated as adolescence gives way to adulthood, educational progression, career progression, relationships, financial and health changes, and other life experiences. As the rides differ so do the contents of the baggage.

Variety

Everyone reading this has a different bike and different baggage, even if you have a 'twin' bike with a partner or if you are an identical sibling. Every bike off an assembly line is a different bike even if it looks identical to another. So are we as riders, and so are our bags. We are equipped to handle our differences in as many ways as we are people with our own life experiences. We all have baggage that includes pre-conceived notions of others and we all approach each other and react to each other based on how our bags are filled with the messages we receive throughout our lives.

One of the best aspects for me of being a motorcyclist is that to other motorcyclists, many of the labels that create baggage in the non-moto world are secondary to the two wheels I ride. I walk into establishments with a helmet in my hand and my bike parked outside that no way I would even stop in if I were driving my buppie (black urban professional instead of young urban professional yuppie) SUV. People approach me when I'm in my leathers and

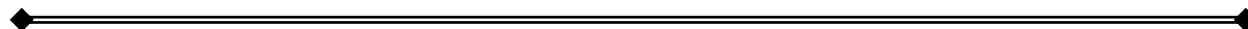
they see my boots are actually scuffed from the foot controls (meaning I'm not just an ornament on the back of someone else's bike) who mom told me to watch out for or who I would not think of approaching if I were in a polo shirt, khakis, and Timberlands. Of course there are those who judge based on the make and model of my two wheels but that is their baggage to deal with if they so choose. I am not so naive as to believe all motorcyclists—even all-female motorcyclists—are without prejudice or issues. But on a larger scale than in society as a whole I find motorcyclists accept a greater variety of people than non-motorcyclists. The two wheels (or three on trikes and sidecar-equipped bikes) are what matter most. This is a world I can live with.

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What's Your Baggage?

Is your baggage removable or permanent? What do you want them to be and can you change one to the other? How full or empty are your bags and how often do you evaluate what you carry? Do you take advantage of the variety available to you or do you focus on a narrow selection? Instead of the question "What color is your parachute?" perhaps we are better served by the question "What type of saddlebags or tank bags do you carry and what's in them?"

Your answers may decide the ride that you take on the road—and throughout life.



Sylvia Henderson runs a business called Springboard Training ... "Your springboard to personal and professional development!" She conducts experiential programs for organizations that want more effective leaders and for people who want to communicate more clearly to achieve more personal and more professional success. She combines her avocation as a motorcyclist with her vocation as a communication skills, leadership, and motivation specialist by incorporating analogies and metaphors from motorcycling to serious personal and professional development topics. Learn more at www.SpringboardTraining.com. Read more at www.VTwinPress.com.

