Rally safety advice & tips

For riders in the TT2000 long-distance motorcycle rally

Background

The TT2000 has been designed for the motorcycle rider who enjoys long- distance riding at a pace of their own choosing on public and scenic roads.
The organizers would like to reiterate that the TT2000 is not in any way a race or a feat of endurance beyond the capabilities of individual riders.
The route and timings have been intentionally structured to allow for a rider to fully complete the rally or, alternatively, to exit the rally at any point.
The primary underlying safety assumption is that each rider will be able to gauge and measure their own capabilities as the ride progresses and take the necessary action to minimize risk.
The guidelines below are a combination of stating the obvious but reiterating the considerations for any rider, experienced in long distance riding or otherwise, to factor into their preparation for this type of event.

Pace and speed

The route is chosen by the rider themselves and will comprise a minimum of 2,000 kms to be completed over the long weekend - between midday Friday and midday Sunday.
Therefore, the theoretical average speed is ~42 km/h assuming the motorcyclist rides for the whole time.
In practice, most riders will split the ride into one afternoon/evening on Friday, a full day on Saturday and a half day on Sunday, with a good rest break overnight on Friday and Saturday.
Assuming the riding window is up to 10 hours on Friday, 14 hours on Saturday and 6 hours on Sunday - in other words riding in daylight - the average speed is 67 km/h and thus considered well within the margin of safe riding.

Time off the bike

Riders will stop and take a forced break for all or some of the following reasons:

- To fuel up.
- To eat and drink.
- To take the obligatory digital photos at the photo checkpoints.
- To have rest and lavatory breaks.
- To go into accommodation for the Friday and Saturday nights.

It is critical that you ride according to how you are feeling literally every hour.

The most successful long-distance riders adopt a series of compulsory ‘micro breaks’ wherein they pull over at pre-determined intervals e.g. 2-hourly and simply lie down for 10 minutes whether or not they believe they need to.

At fuel stops it is advisable to extend the break by eating and drinking, particularly water rather than energy drinks.

Overnighting

A successful ride on Sunday will be more than helped by a refreshing sleep on Friday and Saturday nights in a comfortable bed with a hot shower.
It is strongly advised not to drink alcohol in any quantity on the overnight layovers.
The rally is designed so that a full 6-8 hours' sleep is possible overnight on Friday and Saturday.
In practice if you over-break during the Saturday riding day then the overnight available sleep hours decrease.
Therefore, it is strongly advised to plan your Saturday to accomplish as much distance as possible avoiding leaving yourself with an excessive 'catch up' distance on the Sunday.
A good 8-10-hour ride on Friday afternoon and evening, when you are fresh, will take a lump out of your overall riding distance.

Prematurely exiting the rally

Previous rallies have seen riders, during the course, simply acknowledging they will not be able to complete the distance safely and these decisions have been hailed as highly sensible.

Riders may just wish to head home where they make a call to withdraw – in these situations the organisers will need to be aware of this decision and note their records. A cellphone number has been provided on rally documentation for this purpose.

If the weather becomes too inclement then our advice is to pack it in and try again next year. It is likely most other riders will be making the same call.

Observing road rules

Riders sign a disclaimer form which attests to their being appropriately licensed and that their bike is road-registered and has a current warrant of fitness.

These standards are enforced by attesting to your bike and license being current and valid by ticking an acknowledgement box on the online registration form.

Any bike or rider who fails to furnish the disclaimer or tick the box on the registration form is deemed uncompliant, will not receive their rally shirt thus preventing them from participating in the event.

Inherent in this attestation is the understanding that all riders are aware of the laws of the land with respect to road riding, and it is not our intention to reconfirm the road code here.

The road ahead

New Zealand's roads, while our route comprises the main state highways and some rural back roads, are not immune to uniquely New Zealand hazards for motorcyclists.
Flocks of sheep or cattle are not unheard of on semi-main roads and not all farmers comply with the 'stock ahead' road cone system.
Many bridges have a nasty strip of loose gravel along their middle that is not seen until you are actually on the bridge.
It is very common for overseas tourists to have no idea of how to cross one-lane bridges. Many one-lane bridges have dreadful visibility on approach and if you are on a bridge there is no guarantee a campervan will not simply drive onto the bridge unaware of right of way rules.

While the TT2000 checkpoints are predominantly located on sealed roads, thus avoiding gravel with its inherent risks for road bikes, there may be gravel road checkpoints for riders of adventure bikes with appropriate tyres.
Not all railway crossings are controlled.

Your gear

Ensure your bike is fully serviced and able to travel 2,000 kms on its existing tyres.

Ensure your riding apparel is suited to the vagaries of the New Zealand's changeable weather – rarely will you need summer riding gear such as mesh jackets, rather full leathers or cordura padded jackets and trousers are staple riding gear at this latitude.

Rain suits are advisable as are changes of gloves.

GPSs are not necessary on the TT2000 route and they can be a distraction unless desperately needed.

Carry a cellphone for emergencies and breakdowns.

Bring your own tie-downs for the ferry (should you be traveling between the Islands for the rally).

Riding tips and techniques for extra safety

The shrine of long distance riding, America's Iron Butt Association, publishes a common-sense guide of 29 riding tips for long distance riders covering advice not to drink coffee to the concept of 'learning to stop to go faster' to how to relieve boredom.

On the latter score you are unlikely to face the boredom of the American interstates as opposed to the interesting riding of typical South Island roads.

The Iron Butt tip sheet is downloadable on the TT2000 web site in the Rally Safety page.