



Women's Empowerment Motorcycle Tour

By Alisa Clickenger (MotoAdventureGal) #131331
 Photos by Alisa Clickenger and Karen Thomson

"ALL THOSE MOTORCYCLES IN THE parking lot belong to women?" the hotel receptionist asked in disbelief. "Yes," I answered. "We're on a tour that teaches women how to tour—sort of a rolling classroom." The clerk was clearly impressed, and so was I. We'd ridden over 2,000 miles with this group of ladies, each rider making daily strides toward more confidence with the ultimate goal of touring alone.

It was the penultimate day of the tour, and we'd just rolled into Cascade Locks, Oregon. Nestled between the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the Columbia River, the hotel boasted a spectacular view of the Columbia River. We'd seen so many spectacular sights on the trip, and somehow the seemingly languorous flow of the river was the perfect match to the relaxed mood of the day.

Our goal on this tour was to impart as much knowledge as we could about all aspects of motorcycle touring, while we were touring. We'd picked some of the best roads the Pacific Northwest has to offer as our classroom. The variety of road types (all asphalt), micro-climates and scenery served several functions. One was to expose tour members to every type of situation one might encounter while traveling. Another was to illustrate, by example, the myriad scenic wonders that are just waiting to be discovered by motorcyclists.

The biggest challenge to most of our group was cornering. We'd asked that those who joined the tour have ridden at least 5,000 miles before coming on the tour, yet cornering still eluded most of the riders. My tour partner, Karen Thomson of AVID MotoTours, has many years of experience

as an MSF instructor, and served as a fabulous one-on-one coach. We picked a section of road known for its curves and let tour members follow her line, gaining vicarious knowledge of how to flow with the motorcycle.

This is an example of the one-on-one approach we fostered on this tour, and something that we believe was unique and special about this tour. Sure, there are many all-women's tours in the world, and we lead some of them. But on the Women's Empowerment Motorcycle Tour, tour members can opt into the coaching and the seminars to improve their confidence, or they can simply choose to tour with us because it is a group of all female motorcyclists.

In fact, we offered a great many seminars on the tour. We scheduled seminars daily, at a time of day when group members could choose whether to participate. All seminars on tour were optional, and while seminars were led by the tour leaders, everyone participated and contributed their knowledge and experiences to the greater knowledge pool. This, in essence, is the community we are proud to be building among women motorcyclists.

Because there are so many different riding styles and approaches to traveling, we acknowledge there is no one "right" way to do things (safety concerns excepted!). One of the most valuable parts of the tour was the informal chats we had each time the group came together. We all shared thoughts and feelings about the motorcycles we rode, how we chose those particular bikes, and how we each set them up to suit ourselves.

In fact, the great variety of motorcycles on the tour was a huge advantage. While we all rode our own motorcycles, it was a unique opportunity, in a casual environment, to learn the inner secrets of each model motorcycle. Why do you use that type of bag? What does that do? Where did you get that piece of equipment? These were common questions we asked each other.

The women on the tour were as varied as the motorcycles—Harley-Davidsons, Hondas, BMWs, a Triumph and a KTM. The group included retirees, corporate go-getters, small business wizards and social-service heroes. Our common bond was the



love of motorcycling, a kinship with female riders, and the desire to see new and interesting places on two wheels.

The Women's Empowerment Motorcycle Tour was blessed with a large amount of industry support as well. Several gear companies, magazines, clubs and aftermarket parts manufacturers sent us information to disseminate to tour members. This exposure was invaluable to the riders, benefiting from such a large cross-discipline view of the sport of motorcycling.

REV'IT! stepped up in a big way to support the tour by donating a riding jacket to

the group. Karen and I decided the best way to give the jacket away was to offer an incentive to tour members. In keeping with our intention of empowering tour members to do more touring, we took a peek at each tour member's odometer. The tour member with the most miles ridden by October 31, 2011, will win the jacket.

Karen Thomson and I acknowledge the positive impact that motorcycling has had on both our lives. From increased self esteem (mastery over machine) to a broader view of the world from two wheels, we want to share our passion for motorcycling with

others. In 2012 we'll be leading another Women's Empowerment Motorcycle Tour in the Pacific Northwest, 21-30 June. ☺

Alisa Clickenger (MotoAdventureGal) rode from Connecticut to Argentina by herself in 2009. Karen Thomson was just awarded her 200,000 miles on a BMW certificate. Both are experienced motorcycle tour guides, and live, eat and breath motorcycling. More information on the tour can be found at www.womensempowermentmotorcycltour.com.

