



## Riding Deuce

Riding with a partner is one of the most enjoyable things we do.

I'M NOT USING this month's column to talk about riding a specific Softail model. It's actually about riding with a passenger. For many of us, riding with a partner is one of the most enjoyable things we do while on the road. Having a traveler share your seat and taking in all the experiences together as you thunder down the roadways can make for some memorable rides. With a few of these pointers, those rides can continue to be good memories and

your rider/passenger relationship may improve and become more enjoyable.

There is one important fact to keep in mind: taking on a passenger also means assuming more responsibility. We may understand and acknowledge the fact that our safety as a rider is extremely dependent on our mental attitude, processing, and skill level — we are responsible for our own safety. Our copilot has no control over the operation of our motorcycle and her life is in our hands. For me that's a big deal. I not only want to be the best rider I can be to protect myself, but I want to be sure I do everything I can to ensure the safety of my riding partner.

Okay, you're good with the acceptance of a passenger and the responsibility, what else could there be? Well, to start, we need to consider that carrying a passenger will add additional weight to the motorcycle. This will definitely affect the performance of the bike. Distances for accelerating and stopping will increase. Both parts are important to know when out on the roadway and you need to adjust accordingly. Also, keep in mind that with the change in starting and stopping, you want to fine-tune the process so your passenger isn't spending the day banging helmets with you. Trust me that after a day of headbanging and

seeing DOT real close mucho times, your backseat partner will not be too happy. Also, this should go without saying but I'll toss it in just the same: forget the jackrabbit starts if you have no sissybar/backrest. An act like that will, without a doubt, ruin a relationship.

When it comes to additional weight, traveling with a passenger could also mean additional pounds as far as luggage and/or items for your trip — short or long. You need to keep that in mind, too. Check your owner's manual for its gross vehicle weight rating and make sure you do not exceed it. Once again, you may be taking on risks when it comes to the handling of the bike.

If your passenger has never been on a motorcycle before, you need to educate her as well. Show her the hot points on the bike and places she shouldn't touch or stick her hands/feet in. Explain to her that you're a team when riding, similar to a bobsled. When you turn in a direction she should be looking over your shoulder in the direction of the turn. This will help her lean correctly and make your experience handling a bike with a passenger less of a surprise. Now, if she is new to riding, don't take her on a marathon ride. Besides, more than likely being scared the first few rides, a new passenger's body/muscles are not used to the experience, and they

can become sore quickly.

You should also develop a means of communicating with one another. Deciding to have in-depth conversations while riding will certainly increase the risk factor. If you are thinking about your discussion, your mind is not 100 percent on your riding. Even if you have an intercom system, consider your ability to pay attention to the task at hand. (Okay, this may not be politically correct, but for some reason I have a feeling a lot of guys will be showing that statement to their other halves.)

Another thought, if you gear yourself up with all the proper riding attire, you should do the same for the person along for the ride. Now if matching gear is your flavor, go for it. At a minimum, your traveler should be protected the same, if not better than, yourself.

One thing you can do to improve your experience riding with a passenger is to consider taking a MSF Experienced RiderCourse with a passenger. Learning to handle your bike properly with someone on the back could only make things better for the ride, especially maneuvering at slow speeds.

Finally, consider your passenger's needs when traveling. If additional rest stops or breaks are needed, plan for it. Also, if she has fears or concerns, answer them to help ease her mind. Having a person behind you who is scared, wiggling around because she needs to use the rest room and cold from wearing improper gear, will not only make the experience bad for her but you, too. One other tip that makes things safer and easier for you and your passenger: when she mounts your motorcycle, stand up. You can hold the bike with better balance and control (using the strength of your legs and upper body for improved support while she climbs on), plus it will give her a bit more room to swing her leg over. **AIM**