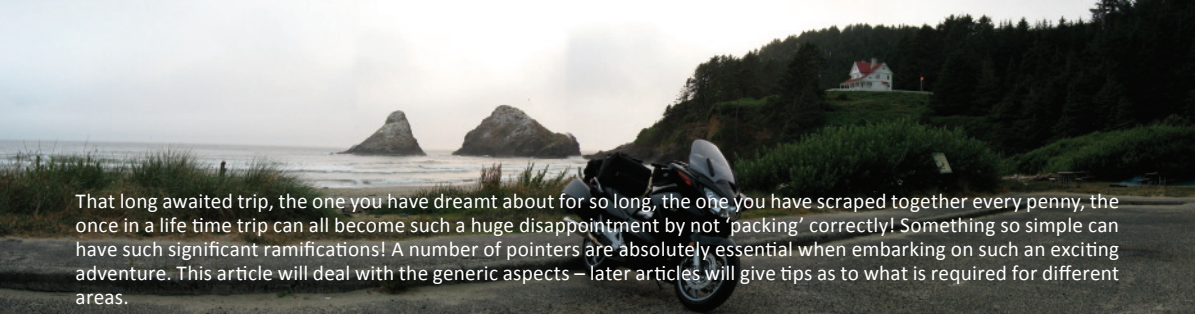


Before you start packing !

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That long awaited trip, the one you have dreamt about for so long, the one you have scraped together every penny, the once in a life time trip can all become such a huge disappointment by not 'packing' correctly! Something so simple can have such significant ramifications! A number of pointers are absolutely essential when embarking on such an exciting adventure. This article will deal with the generic aspects – later articles will give tips as to what is required for different areas.

For all trips the key areas to be considered before beginning to pack are:

- The nature of the trip – where to and the duration?
- Your own personal requirements i.e. protective clothing, casual clothing, personal hygiene and medical requirements;
- The actual bike requirements such as tyres, fuel capacity, spares, puncture kits, tow ropes, tools and related equipment;
- Accommodation requirements such as tents, mattresses, camping stools, ground sheets etc
- The back up facilities on the trip – will you have a dedicated resource back up for the whole trip?

Let's tackle these each in turn! Remember you will not end up taking everything you may want to – the packing only starts once you have 'trimmed' your list to those absolutely essential items that can be carried on the trip!

The Nature of the Trip: Is there a detailed itinerary? How long will the trip be? What facilities will be available at each stop over? Do you understand the conditions you're going to be faced with? What are the temperature extremes? What are the general conditions to be experienced?

Personal Requirements: The answers to the questions above will give you a rough idea as to the personal clothing you need to consider. If you are in a predominantly constant temperature range then for example you may choose a summer airflow jacket to deal with the high daily temperatures and take a rain suit to cut out the wind chill factor when it becomes a little nippy! And of course you'll be dry should the area you're going to enjoy rainy weather! On the other hand you may have to experience extreme heat and cold. In which case a dual-purpose jacket with removal liners and ventilation could be the answer. Each part of the protective clothing range will have options to suit the conditions you'll be riding in. Basic items such as the hydration pack are critical – ask any rider who has suffered from dehydration! Remember all your medicinal requirements – write them down with the instructions – give a copy to your mate. This will assist the group should you need assistance!

Bike Requirements: Your tyre choice for example will be absolutely critical – riders in the last Dakar found how important this was when they made the incorrect choices in so far as tubes versus musses were concerned! Other aspects such as being able to change the air and oil filters, being able to remove the wheels, tyre levers, air pump (foot, bomb or motorised?), being able to service the suspension or even remove a spring – all of these are fundamental to your basic plan as to where you will be riding!

Accommodation requirements: Will you be camping or not? If so for how long at a time and do you need a fully waterproof tent? How much space do you want in the tent – enough to take all your goods – stop theft or just enough to sleep in? Do you want to be able to stand in the tent or not? Is the hard ground your choice or do you want a comfortable blow up mattress or even a stretcher – they make them strong and light now a days! What type of sleeping bag do you need and will you need a ground sheet? Oh yes the camping stool is to enable you to put your boots on in luxury without having to jump around all over the place! The older you get the better this idea becomes!!!!

Back Up Requirements: If you have the luxury of a back up vehicle it will make many of your decisions that much easier! Just one word of warning – the more self-sufficient you are the more enjoyable your trip! You are able to enjoy those spontaneous decisions you make along the way!

Having worked on all these ideas and thoughts you are now ready to implement and start 'packing!'

Next month we'll tackle this aspect in respect of the areas one can travel to in South Africa!