

# WHAT DO I NEED TO TAKE?

iving in Michigan in my youth, I once took a multi-day motorcycle camping tour on a Honda CB750, traveling into Canada and around the Great Lakes. My gear consisted of a basic Boy Scout pup tent, sleeping bag and a mess kit. Wearing a leather jacket and jeans and packing a yellow rain suit from the hardware store, it's a terrific memory.>>>

GETTING STARTED ON YOUR FIRST MOTORCYCLE CAMPING TOUR.

All the gear for a luxury camping experience anywhere in the world will comfortably fit in the panniers and two duffel bags.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY STEVEN M. GREEN

After a long hiatus, I recently took up riding again, and it wasn't long before the camping bug bit once again, too. Now with several multi-month moto-camping expeditions under my belt, I'm able to share what I've learned along the way.

The same rules apply whether you ride strictly on pavement or venture off into the back woods on an adventure bike. You want to keep things light and efficient. Minimalist thinking is the mindset, but a few luxuries can make the camping sweeter.

First I acquired the obvious stuff: tent, sleeping bag, camp stove, mess kit, food, a chair and a headlamp, but I decided more research was needed. I went online and found a batch of different lists, but actually came away more confused than before. Eventually I got enough together for my first outing (much to the delight of the local REI store) and began to find out what I missed and what I didn't need as my camping experience grew. I learned that there is no one perfect list; your needs will vary depending on the length of the trip, where you are going and the season.

Being a frugal guy, I thought I had scored a home run when I found a "2-person" tent in the local big box store for less than \$30. With nice weather, it was OK, but cramped.



**Creating your own complete list for all seasons, and checking off items as you pack, will insure nothing is forgotten. Your list will evolve with experience.**

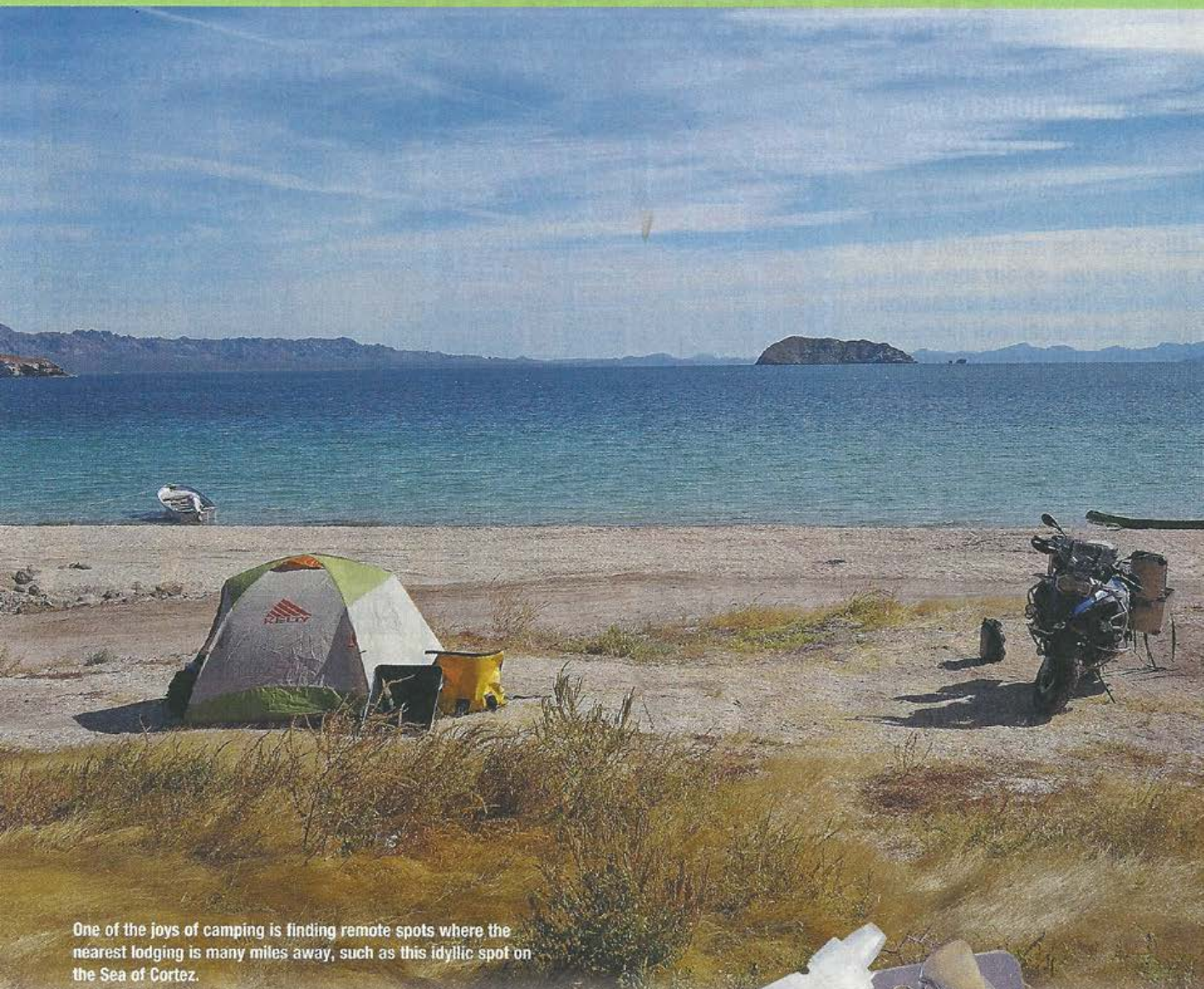
On my third trip, when our group encountered freezing rain, I awakened at 4 a.m. in a cold, wet sleeping bag with no place to go. When I got home, I ordered a premium 3-person tent with a full-coverage rain fly. Lesson No. 1: Get the good stuff! It will last longer and has been designed to withstand more of what Mother Nature will throw at you. Also, I found that

with a 3-person tent there is enough room inside to change clothes, hang out on a rainy day and keep my riding gear inside and dry.

My daughter gave me some good advice about sleeping bags based on her experience backpacking through Europe: spend the extra bucks to get a good down-filled bag. They pack smaller, are lighter and insulate better than the polyester versions. The temperature ratings on sleeping bags are seemingly the temps at which you will freeze solid—not be comfortable. So I got a 20-degree down bag, and when it drops below 40, I wear long underwear and use an inner liner or a blanket. The flip side of this compromise is that the bag is not too hot in warm weather.



**Camping in established campgrounds will typically include a table that helps keep things organized and up off the ground. Keeping everything consistently in the same place on your bike makes packing and finding items much easier.**



One of the joys of camping is finding remote spots where the nearest lodging is many miles away, such as this idyllic spot on the Sea of Cortez.

Another down insulated item that I cherish is my quilted nylon jacket. It gets chilly at higher elevations, even in the middle of the summer. Don't forget a wool beanie for the noggin, too.

Be sure to test everything before starting out on a trip. That includes setting up a new tent and trying out a sleeping bag, and learning how to use all of your electronics, like that new satellite phone you rented to keep in touch with the dog sitter while you're in the middle of the Yukon.

For emergencies, I carry a small package of waterproof matches, a whistle, a pocketknife and a plastic mirror for signaling in my riding jacket. I also have a GPS locator with an SOS medical emergency beacon that stays close. That lesson was brought home when a buddy riding solo went off the road into a ditch and was pinned under his bike for about 18 hours. He now rides with the locator/SOS all the time.

Electronic stuff needs batteries and chargers. A worthwhile addition to your motorcycle is a fused "always hot" plug that can charge your cell phone or handheld GPS without having to turn on the ignition. Solar chargers are becoming plentiful



For remote locations, keep emergency items in your jacket, such as a small flashlight, whistle, matches, signaling mirror, eyedrops, a few coins and a pocket knife. A Spot or inReach satellite messenger can be lifesaving.

