

Accommodating Your Female Passenger

FEMALE PASSENGERS GET A BAD RAP. THEY'RE not considered motorcyclists because they ride on the back instead of the front, yet they participate in the riding experience almost as much as the riders. They still

feel the wind in their faces, and they still need all the protection riders need. They also have fitment needs just like riders: Are their seats and backrests comfortable, and are the footpegs or floorboards in accommodating positions?

Passengers are considered second bananas in the motorcycling world, which amazes me since female passengers often play a significant role in the purchase decision of a motorcycle. They also spend just as much money on clothing and gear as the rider. All this leads me to ask riders this question: Is it important to you that your female passenger is comfortable? If yes, what are you doing to make her ride a pleasant experience?

If you have any intention of carrying a babe on the back for a considerable distance, then you must set up your motorcycle to make room for a passenger. A rider who does not plan on carrying a passenger, but stumbles upon the occasional woman who'll put up with a fender as a seat, has found someone who may want more than just a ride on his bike. It makes me laugh when I see a gal practically in a fetal position, her arms wrapped around some guy's belly, holding on for dear life, with her knees up to her ears because of oddly placed footpegs. With greater numbers of custom bikes with solo seats on the road, we're more likely to witness the above picture.

If you own a solo-seat motorcycle and want to accommodate the occasional passenger, then spring for a removable pillion cushion; the kind with suction cups does the job just fine. And make sure you have passenger footpegs.

Now, if you're like this man who recently sent me a letter saying he wants to enjoy his newly purchased Dyna Low Rider with his wife, but disagrees with her about how the passenger area should be set up, then you have an important decision to make. His quandary is one I've heard time and time again from male riders. He likes the look of a particular seat, but the narrow Badlander-style back end is not wide, nor cushy, enough for a passenger to be comfortable. He told me he installed a backrest, but it's one of those really low models that barely comes up to the small of your back. He also wrote that he offered to buy his wife padded shorts (like bicycle rider shorts) so her butt wouldn't get sore. I laughed and wrote back, "You're kidding, right?" Let's just give a woman



another reason to make her think her butt looks fat!

What I advised was this: You either accommodate her or you don't. There's no halfway compromise if you're expecting your passenger to enjoy the riding experience to its fullest. Why should she be short-changed on comfort when you're not? You don't want a crabby passenger with you all day, do you?

Experience has shown me over the 15 years I've been riding that comfort and efficiency always win over aesthetics. I held off as long as I could by not cluttering up my Dyna with a windshield and saddlebags. I put up with the bugs, rain, and constant wind in my face for several years. I also became an expert bungee cord user.

However, my young face began showing adverse signs of age after several hot, dry summers of long-distance riding, and I was tired of being limited in what I could carry with me on my bike. Eventually, I caved in and rationalized my accessorizing decision by installing a detachable windshield and removable saddlebag supports. Guess what? The bags have never been removed and the windshield hardly ever comes off. My point is, over time you'll find that the coolness factor can still be had on a motorcycle that's accessorized.

Are you holding back on installing that two-up cushy seat with the nice high, padded backrest because it detracts from your bad-boy biker image? I agree that the bike doesn't look as sleek with all those accessories on it, but you can't have it both ways. If you want the pleasure of having your female partner enjoy a day in the saddle with you, then provide her with a decent saddle.

I told this fellow who wrote me that if he was so concerned about keeping his sleek stock seat, he could still use it when he rode solo. Motorcycle seats are easy enough to take on and off. When he wants to ride by himself, he can put on the original seat. When he wants to ride with his wife, he can install the cushier seat and detachable backrest. Who sees the seat anyway when you're riding? You're sitting on it. Isn't the happiness and satisfaction of your backseat rider worth the investment of a comfortable saddle? I think so. **AIM**

Editor's note: If you've got press releases, story ideas, or anything worth mentioning with regard to women and motorcycling, e-mail them to Genevieve at GSchmitt@WomenRidersNow.com. You can also visit her web site www.WomenRidersNow.com.