

THE OUTSIDE EDGE

times

By: George Tranos



OPTIONS FOR COLD WEATHER MOTORCYCLING...

As the riding season comes to a close in the northeast, many riders will be putting their motorcycles into hibernation for the winter. Storing your motorcycle properly is important so your bike can be ready to ride quickly come springtime. But what about you and your desire to keep riding – how can you accomplish this through the cold winter months?

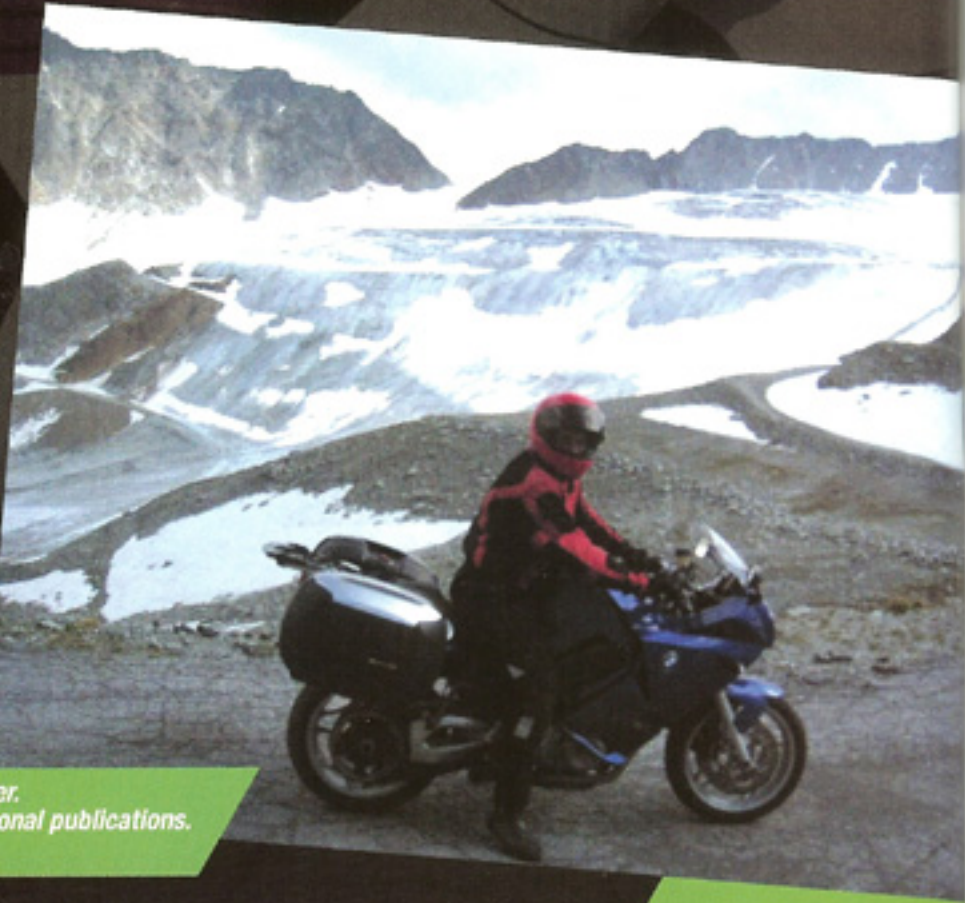
One option is to fly someplace warm and rent a motorcycle. There are many areas across the country where riding in the winter months is possible and even enjoyable. Florida, California and Hawaii are three that come readily to mind. Motorcycle rental facilities are available in all of these (and other) locations. Some BMW, Triumph, Harley-Davidson and other dealerships rent motorcycles. Eaglerider, Sportbikerental.com, Dubbelju motorcycle rental and other private firms also rent motorcycles.

Another possibility is to ride in a warm weather locale with a motorcycle touring company. Imagine seeing New Zealand, South Africa, Morocco, Australia, Brazil, Argentina or many other countries in the southern hemisphere during our winter (and their summer) months. Edelweiss, Brazil Moto, Peru Motors, Compass Expeditions, Adventure New Zealand tours, IMT Bike, Moto Quest Tours and other tours sponsored by some of the motorcycle magazines all provide winter riding opportunities. The advantages of riding with an experienced touring company include airport pickup and delivery, luggage transport, local experienced guides, preplanned routes, prearranged hotel stays, language translation, knowledge of local customs and group camaraderie. Prices vary but expect to get what you pay for. A good, all-inclusive motorcycle tour can be purchased for just the price of staying in a first-class hotel. You must add airfare, gas, some meals and tolls. Prices usually are for double occupancy. Bring your significant other, you can share a great riding vacation & save money too.

For those not opposed to trying something different, you can ride all-terrain vehicles such as quads during the colder weather. Snowmobiles are real wintertime vehicles and with a good snow base you don't have to travel far to enjoy – some ski areas have trails and snowmobiles nearby for rent. Both ATV's and snowmobiles can provide similar sensations to riding with differing handling characteristics. You must dress warmly and use a fog proof face-shield. Cold weather gauntlet gloves are a must and no skin should be exposed. Dress in layers to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. It can be a lot of fun sliding around in the snow, climbing hills and going where street motorcycles can never travel. Be careful to only ride in areas where it is legal and safe. Always ride with a buddy when traveling off-road, carry emergency gear including a first aid kit, flashlight, extra food and drink, towline and Mylar blanket. Leave a route plan with a trusted friend or family member who will call for help if you are not back by a previously established time. Avoid riding in extreme cold, as just a short time exposed to the elements can be dangerous.

For the hardest among us, riding through the winter is always an option. Your motorcycle won't mind the cold as much as you do but be careful if the temperature drops near or below freezing. Layered clothing, cold weather riding gear and heated jacket liners and gloves have come a long way and can provide temperature-controlled warmth. Stop frequently to warm up as numb hands and feet cannot operate the controls as easily. Drink non-alcoholic liquids such as soup or tea to warm the body quickly. Watch out for black ice, especially over bridges and around blind corners. Do not ride through wet leaves or other roadside obstacles and beware of potholes and frost heaves. When in doubt, take the car, public transportation, catch a ride with a friend or stay home. Avoid riding in snow, hail or rain that can change to freezing rain or ice. Delay departure, change your route or just stay home.

Cold weather riding can be safe if done prudently. Of course, the only real cure for the wintertime motorcycle blues is the arrival of spring. Pick your days, enjoy your time out riding but be smart. Warmer weather is just a few months away.



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