

**COMMON SENSE BAJA RIDING GUIDELINES. Most of this is common sense. If you ride with your buddies often in Baja then most of this doesn't apply. If new to Baja or riding with newbies, there may be some helpful hints.**

1. When riding in Baja you should remember that all the fire roads and trails are also used by locals, so your chances of encountering a truck on a blind curve are very real. No matter how good you are, you will probably lose when you have less than 2 seconds to react on a blind curve to a 1970 Datsun pick-up with a cow in the back. Even though you have not seen a vehicle for a long time, stay to the right approaching curves and assume there is someone coming in the opposite direction at the worst possible moment, and on the wrong side of the road (true story).

2. Trailside injuries can have grave consequences in Baja where access to adequate care can be hours away. Evaluate your aggressiveness compared to local dune or track riding; an ambulance will not come and get you in Baja. Aeromedevac services are available for \$3000 on your charge card. Satellite phones are great to have but have the numbers you want to dial already stored in the phone. Know how to use the phone. Binational Emergency Medical Care (619-425-5080), Aeromedevac Services (619-284-7910), or maybe a doctor friend you know stateside are good numbers to have. If you have a support truck, the truck should have another sat phone as well. Remember, medical help is a long way away (many hours) and you will suffer much pain if you crash and injure yourself. Never ride faster than you can see. For example, slow down when riding between two wooden posts in the event it has a single strand of barbed wire. Sometimes it's hard to hold back when you are dicing with your riding buddies, but getting hurt in Baja can be fatal. Have fun, be careful. It's a long way out if you get hurt.

3. Don't follow too close. People riding close together have problems when the leader kicks up a cloud of dust and the next person can't see the trail, ruts or big rocks. Following too close has caused many accidents in Baja. You should follow just behind the dust of the person in front of you, based on the wind and how the dust is dispersing. The group will fall in a natural riding order; if the rider in front of you is slower, then pass him. Don't sit there and eat his dust! Enjoy the ride; this is the most awesome riding in the world! Practice trail etiquette by not roosting fellow riders when passing.

4. Wear protective riding gear. It's a must in Baja. This cannot be stressed enough.

5. Always carry enough gas, water, and energy bars to get you to the next stop or meeting place; plus some. Carry tools and common spare parts unique to your bike. **HAVE YOUR BIKE IN PERFECT MECHANICAL CONDITION.** If you were thinking about replacing something, do it **BEFORE** a Baja trip. Worn tires, old chains, barely useable sprockets, etc. can cause the whole group unnecessary waiting when you can be riding. Remember, the truck with the tools is not over the next hill; and you will not be able to hitch-hike out. Evaluate gasoline stops based upon the smallest tank in the group.

6. Highly recommend heavy duty tubes in your tires for Baja riding. Slime or Multi-seal sealant is recommended. You may want to consider a little higher air pressure in your tires specifically to prevent flats (Baja: 18psi front, 16psi rear).

7. Always slow down when passing through a ranch, farm or when passing any vehicle. Wave at the kids. Wave at all locals. Do not roost a vehicle being passed. When encountering opposing vehicles or other motorcycles, we "count down" by letting them know how many people are in our group. For example, if we have 5 riders in the group the first rider should show 5 fingers to show the number of people in the group to oncoming traffic. Subsequent riders should show 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 (closed fist). This helps other vehicles and riders to be safer and alert to avoid a head on collision. More times than not opposing riders will just wave back at you, but it's a practice that is catching on. Oh, the speed limit in the Parque Nacional at Laguna Hanson is 25MPH.

8. You will encounter cows, horses, mules, goats, sheep, dogs and every other animal on the trail. Most are terrified of motorcycles. Slow down and do not anticipate that it will just get out of your way. Cows and dogs are unpredictable and seem to not know what to do. The guys out front are usually the lucky ones to see the occasional bobcats and deer but they are never a problem.

9. While riding, carry ID and proof of ownership of the bike (title, registration, or in the worst case, a copy of either). Carry only the absolutely necessary wallet items with you; and hide the majority of your cash in your sock in your boot. A passport will ease your return to the USA.

10. There are Mexican Army roadblocks checking against guns and drugs, even on the trail. Do not bring guns or ammo in Mexico. Guaranteed that you will spend time in jail and you will jeopardize EVERYONE in the group. Don't be freaked when you get stopped; they have a right to search you (and they will). Usually 18 and 19 year olds with rifles but always a Capt there. Always be polite and always speak English to the soldiers unless you are totally fluent in Spanish. Never admit to any question they ask in Spanish that you do not fully understand. I even had a patrol ask for a hit of water off my water hydration system once!

11. In Baja, the route you want is usually the most traveled and well-worn. Look for ribbon markings and motorcycle tracks on less-traveled tracks. Sometimes groups will play "Follow the leader," where the lead rider will wait at an intersection or questionable trailhead and hold up one arm. When the next rider appears, he will hold up one arm indicating acknowledgement and the lead rider will continue while the second rider waits for the next. Each successive rider will do the same thing until the next rider shows up. This keeps the group going and makes sure everyone is going in the same direction. Do not proceed until your buddy knows to wait for the next rider. There should be designated stops where everyone re-groups.

12. If you've become separated from the group, don't pass any forks or closed gates. Don't assume that you know which way they went. Stop and wait. Waiting will be very hard to do, but the leader or sweep will be back to get you/catch up with you soon. The people who get lost the most assume they know which way to go and end up very far away from the group - endangering themselves and the group. Remember, this is a group effort.

13. Always shut gates that you encounter, whether open or closed. "Gates" in Baja are simply thickly cut tree branches connected with barbed wire, connected to a fence with Mexican ingenuity. Arrange to have (1) the lead rider open and sweep rider close, or (2) have the lead rider open and close after all riders have passed, the second rider now becoming the lead rider and doing the same thing at the next gate (we will do this in areas of many gates).

14. Under no circumstances should you cut the lock on a locked gate. This is what's giving dirt riders a bad name in Baja. There is a reason that rancher has put the lock there.

15. Don't ride over cactus or downed barbed wire gates. It takes just the right angle to cause a flat tire! Usually the tire will be flat in the morning.

16. There are no bathrooms out there. Either carry a small amount of toilet paper or think real hard before leaving your morning departure point.

17. There is cell phone coverage along the border and in most Baja cities, including Ojos Negros, Heroes de la Independencia, and Valle de Trinidad. ATT/Cingular has an agreement with Telcel and Movistar. You must activate the "international" plan on your cell phone while in the U.S. in order to make calls (you can receive them without plan activation).

Tidbits: While on the Score course from Hwy 3/Km 78 to just south of Nuevo Junction, you are in range of the cell tower at Heroes de la Independencia. At Mike's Sky Rancho, if you proceed west up the hill towards El Coyote, and stop at the right hand turn down Simpson's, you will be line-of-sight with the cell tower in Valle de Trinidad.

**18. HAVE FUN AND BE SAFE!**