

NEW COLUMN!

# ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

## ‘What can I do to make my nervous pillion enjoy it?’

**Q** I’VE PERSUADED MY other half to go touring with me as a pillion this summer but she’s nervous and isn’t massively keen. Is there anything I can do to increase the chances she enjoys it? I’ve been riding for three years, so I’m not hugely experienced.

Stuart Piper, Chelmsford, Essex

**A** THE GOOD NEWS is there are plenty of things you can do to help your partner love the trip, and it’s refreshing to hear someone take their pillion’s enjoyment seriously. Far too many riders just set off, scare their passenger witless and put them off forever. There are two basic areas that you need to think about: your riding and coaching your pillion.

Starting with your riding, the most

important thing from a pillion’s point of view is smoothness.

If your speed gently ebbs and flows as you fluidly negotiate hazards, your pillion can relax and enjoy the ride, safe in the knowledge that, unless a genuine emergency occurs, there will be no sudden braking or fierce acceleration. You can cover ground very briskly like this, though your pillion probably won’t notice.

So, how to be this smooth? Obviously you need to have a good level of throttle, brake and clutch control to prevent any jerks on gear changes, stops and pull-aways. However, with three years riding under your belt, you’ve probably cracked that. Far more important is vision and planning.

A good rider will make life so much easier for the pillion because they’ll see hazards far in the distance and make plans for how to deal with them in plenty of time. So instead of slamming on the anchors when a car suddenly nudges out of a junction, you’ll have seen them far earlier, adjusted your speed and moved laterally across the lane to increase the chances they see you. Then they might not pull out in the first place and, if they do, you’re expecting it and can smoothly come to a halt.

This takes practice but it’s worth doing for your own benefit as well as your pillion’s – improving how you read the road is the single most transformational thing you can do for your riding. It’s what gives great riders so much time and



Having spent seven years as a surveillance rider with the National Crime Agency, Ryan Decarteret is one of Britain’s most-skilled, safest and most qualified road riders

space to react to whatever comes their way on the roads.

Even if your vision and planning are excellent, it’s still worth a pre-ride chat with your pillion because if they panic and sit bolt upright in a corner, it can get very messy. Ask them to just sit there like a sack of potatoes, relax, and do nothing besides hold onto the grabrail with one hand, and you with the other. That way, they can brace themselves against braking and acceleration.

You don’t mention if your bike has a top-box but, for a touring trip, I’d recommend fitting one with a backrest. It won’t do much for your street cred but it will make long journeys far, far more comfortable and relaxing for your pillion.

Depending on the weight of your partner and how much kit you’re taking, you might have to put extra pressure in the tyres (check your handbook) and also adjust the preload at both ends. This will keep the suspension working in its correct range – again, your handbook will give you a guide.

Finally, work up to the big trip gently – go for a ten-minute trip around the block to start with, then an hour, then a half-day. This will help both of you get used to the experience.

Good luck, and enjoy your summer! **R**

Smoothness and practice make touring fun for rider and pillion



  
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PRO COACH TEAM

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