

Proper Riding Wear

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We all know what we are supposed to wear while riding but we do not always look at what we are wearing to see that it is going to do what we want it to do. Most of us look at riding clothing made especially for riding in and get a bad case of sticker shock. Then we go out and find something that will work but for less money. The only problem is that we buy items that are designed for normal everyday life. Most clothing for everyday life is designed to make us look good when we are standing because that is when we will make a first impression on someone. When we are on the Motorcycle we are sitting. We also want the clothing to work as a safety item when we have that rare occurrence of meeting the pavement while still going 30 MPH.

I have a leather coat I wear when I am not on the bike. It's black, has snaps at the cuff, and an elastic waist to hold it tight and keep the air out, and it very soft and supple and feels great. These are all nice for everyday use but this jacket will not protect me as well if I go sliding down the highway in it. Motorcycle jackets are cut different from normal jackets. They have longer sleeves that taper down to a very tight fit at the end of the sleeve and usually have zippers or Velcro tabs to keep the cuff tight. This keep the sleeve from riding up and keeps the cold air out. On my everyday jacket the snap will come open and the sleeve will ride up my arm exposing my skin to the pavement. The shoulders and back are cut with extra room so that when on the bike the jacket is not pulling on my arms. The jacket then tapers down at the waist and is longer in the back so that the small of your back is not cold from being exposed. There is usually a Velcro tab in the front or on the sides so that you can make it tight at the waist. This will keep the jacket in place when you use it as protection from the pavement. My everyday jacket will be bunched up around my neck by the time I stop sliding in the same situation. Another difference is the leather it self. My every day jacket is lambskin that looks like leather but is very soft and does not have a very high density and will shred pretty fast. The motorcycle jacket is heavy cowhide that is fairly stiff and will require some break in when it is new. My motorcycle jacket is also brightly colored for visibility. When you try a jacket on in the store if it feels good when you are standing in the isle it will not feel as good on the bike. Motorcycle jackets feel good when you are in a riding position, so when you try it on sit down like you are on the bike and try it that way. You will feel the difference.

In the spring and fall it is easy to dress in proper apparel because you will be cold if you don't. When it gets hot we have the urge to get out there in cotton T-shirts. A long sleeve T is better than a short sleeve to protect you for the sun and the wind drying your skin out and letting the sun burn you but it will do nothing during the slid. I recently bought a new summer jacket for hot weather riding. The jacket is cut for motorcycling and is made of ballistic nylon mesh with armor behind it. I wore this jacket on a 750-mile one-day trip last summer in 99-degree heat and was not hot as long as the bike was moving. I have also noticed that this jacket is not warm enough when the temperature gets below 70 degrees. It has lots of airflow through it but it does not allow the moisture in your skin to get away. This is a big factor in staying cool. It also does not let the sun shine directly on you and burn you. There are lots of manufactures making this type of jacket and they retail between \$90 and \$150 dollars. The comfort and protection they provide is a bargain when you consider you spent 20K for you luxury-touring bike.

So look at the made for cycling clothes and look at them differently next time. Your clothes are just as important for your comfort and safety as the motorcycle you are sitting on. They will make your ride a better experience than the everyday cheaper clothes we wear everyday to look good.