

Backroad Bob's Tips for Trips

Planning a successful IFMR ride

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I'm often asked for guidance in planning Mn IF R event to get the most participation and rider enjoyment. Here are a few things I've learned from experience.

Usually 2-3 months is needed to get a weekend event onto people's calendars and let them make plans to attend. Longer events need even more lead time.

Start planning well in advance. Think of some likely routes and possible dates. Aim for a route that will be interesting and enjoyable to riders and their passengers. Don't make it too long – about 200 miles of twisty roads will take about six hours of riding time, about as much as most passengers can endure. Anything more than 220 miles of twisty roads will produce complaints from passengers.

Plan to start at 9 AM and be back by about 5 PM. If necessary, you can push the start time up to 8:30 but not much earlier. If you're lucky and complete the ride before 5 PM, it will give everyone time for more face- to-face fellowship together after the ride.

Allow about 2½ hours for lunch and pit stops enroute. You may think you can get the group moving in 10-15 minutes after making a 'short pit stop'; but you'll find that it's VERY hard to get a group moving again in less than 25-30 minutes. Even a 'quick lunch' with a group usually takes more than an hour, so assume it will take an hour and a half.

Make your first pit stop no more than one hour from the start. Remember, many will have been tanking up on coffee shortly before

the start and will need to stop in about an hour. Plan on two pit stops after lunch.

Include a couple of special attractions along the way, if possible. Allow plenty of time for stops and fellowship enroute. Try to arrange 'meet & greet' events with local Rotary clubs, etc.

Once you have a tentative decision on the likely route, then pick a date. Try to avoid dates with big local sports events or other events that will fill up area lodging places.

Once you have a date, start contacting lodges/motels that you'll need to check availability and get written quotes for your group. Ask for a few more rooms than you think you'll need, with agreement to release unreserved rooms 3-4 weeks before the actual date of use but with the group rate still available after the date if vacancies are still available. That's common practice.

As soon as you have pinned down the dates, the route, and the lodging details, put together and distribute an announcement flyer with details. The sooner the better!

Finally, before the event, do a pre-run to check the road conditions, travel times, and other details. Make changes as needed based on the pre-run. You'll end up with a better event, and you'll have more fun yourself.