

# THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

THE MOTORCYCLE TRAVEL NETWORK HELPS YOU FIND A HOME ON THE ROAD

**H**OW DO YOU make a road trip better? Spend your nights with motorcycle enthusiasts and make friends of strangers. You can, thanks to a creative couple that has made it easier for like-minded riders to spend time together as they travel across the country and around the globe.

Christi and Scott Reynolds, veteran motorcycle tourists, have lived many a rider's dream: traveling around the country by motorcycle for months on end, staying in youth hostels, campgrounds, and with family, friends, and friends of friends. They recognized that the most memorable part of their trips were their encounters with other motorcyclists. Those meetings, however, were typically in parking lots as they were heading out of town—too few and far between and maddeningly brief.

To help motorcyclists enrich their travel experience through the camaraderie of other riders and at the same time keep expenses down, they created the Motorcycle Travel Network, through which motorcycle travelers seeking a place to stay and enjoy the company of people with similar interests are paired with riders or motorcycle enthusiasts willing to offer their hospitality. It's an equally good resource for riders who aren't the least budget-minded. Although many riders can easily afford to stay in four-star hotels, sometimes they'd prefer the companionship of convivial motorcyclists and leap at the chance to swap stories and compare experiences at day's end. Not only do they gain a congenial atmosphere, but they also score an insider's perspective on their destinations since hosts can provide suggestions for their region's best riding, eateries, and attractions.

Hosting organizations, Christi observes, are not new, but they are unfamiliar to many. A teacher for nineteen years, she and Scott belong to Educators' Bed & Breakfast, a hosting organization for teachers. They left home in July 2004 for a two-year motorcycle trip and through those connections stayed with a couple of hosts along the way. "We loved the experience so much because staying with the locals and learning about the area from their perspectives is so much fun." The downside, she says, was they always had to make an issue about the fact that they'd arrive by motorcycle, and some hosts who were unfamiliar with motorcyclists and influenced by stereotypes had a bit



of apprehension. A few, she recalls, envisioned motorcyclists as Hell's Angels. Fortunately a rare breed, "There are still those who perceive riders as people that are going to be drinking on their front lawn or something," she says with a laugh.

Everyone, she's quick to add, was gracious, "But we thought, wouldn't it be nice if we didn't have to explain ourselves every time we wanted to stay with a host?" The only way to do that, the Reynolds reasoned, would be to stay with other motorcyclists. They asked themselves why there wasn't a hosting organization for motorcyclists, and, unable to think of a reason, concluded it was time to start one. Each motorcycle brand, Christi says, has a riders' group that typically publishes a directory that members can use when they find themselves in trouble. But there's no organized means, until now, by which riders could stay with other riders with-

out, says Christi, "feeling like they're mooching off them."

Today, the Reynolds are still traveling the country by motorcycle, but more often than not these days they're going to rallies to give seminars that explain the host concept and introduce attendees to the idea. Network procedures are simple, she explains. "When you stay with hosts, you give them a \$20 gratuity (\$15 if you're traveling solo), and they put you up for the night and feed you breakfast the next day. It's just great because you learn all about places that they've traveled and they tell you what to see in the area—things that you don't want to miss and that you probably wouldn't have known about otherwise."

The Reynolds have been trying to build their membership, which, they point out, is not at all brand-specific. There tend to be more BMW and Gold Wing riders, they observe, but simply because they're more likely to travel than others. The Reynolds' are eager to stretch their network around the world within the next three years, because, says Christi, "There are motorcyclists everywhere."

Join the MTN if you need a motorcycle-friendly place to hang your helmet on the road or if you want to welcome motorcycle travelers into your home. Hosts are listed in an online membership directory, and travelling members log on and search for hosts at their destinations or stopovers along the way. Call 877.408.0471, or visit [www.motorcycle-travel.net](http://www.motorcycle-travel.net). ☺