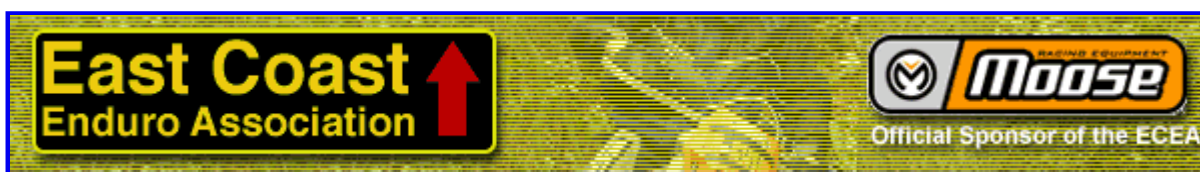


So, what is this Dual Sport thing?

Dual Sport motorcycle rides were created in California in 1984 by Jim Pilon. The concept is to offer riders a group ride that encompasses scenery, history and challenge in a non-competitive, on-road / off-road riding experience. Jim's original definition of Dual Sport was "Dual, as in road and dirt, and Sport as in a non-competitive venue". This concept remains true today.

There are a few sites that you might look at to see how others describe the dual sport experience:

(Click on the logos below to go to their Dual Sport Definition pages.)



Of course, I have my own thoughts on dual sport riding. Below is my theory of dual sport:

Dual Sport Theory
by RL Lemke

Dual Sport motorcycle events seem to mean different things to different people. I say this because I have ridden a number of events in AMA Districts 36 and 37. While enjoying each, I have found that each was created with a different emphasis, depending on who was offering the ride. *** I would divide the offerings of dual sport rides into two distinct camps: First, those put on by a motorcycle club; and second, those put on by a promoter.

Most dual sport rides, are put on by local motorcycle clubs. Members of these clubs tend to be long time off-road riders, and as such, like a high degree of challenge in their rides. These rides remind me of enduros, without the time keeping. So, if you are interested in being challenged through-out the ride, yet do not want to race, look to a club ride.

A growing number of dual sport rides are being put on by promoters. A promoter's perspective is a little different than a club, in that they want to appeal to the largest possible group of riders. They want to offer a ride that is fun for the new rider, as well as the experienced rider. They want to offer a ride that is fun on a converted dirt bike or new dualsport bike (eg: Suzuki DR-Z400S & KTM LC4) as well as the new breed of large displacement adventure bikes (eg: BMW GS, Tiger, etc...). This philosophy may not appeal to the rider looking for an extreme ride. However, the focus of promoters is to broaden the appeal of the event.

*** I understand that this is an oversimplification, however, it accurately reflects my experience. And yes, I can list a number of exceptions to this generalization myself.

In the future, I think there will be a movement toward the style of dual sport ride that appeals to an even broader group of riders. You see, there is a trend occurring with regard to who is participating in dual sport rides. First, there are getting to be a sizable number of women out there motorcycle riding. Some within the motorcycle industry, predict that dual sport riders will soon be 35% women. And second, there are a large number of street bike riders crossing over to participate in dual sport rides. While many of these cross-over riders develop exceptional off-road riding skills, there are a lot of riders that are not comfortable with riding even B level enduro trails.

I would like to see dual sport rides offer participants the opportunity to enjoy the back country. The ride should offer reasonable challenge to the novice off-roader, then have more challenging optional loops for the experienced rider. Along the ride route there should be plenty of scenic and historical experiences. For those that are short on time, or short on energy, there should be plenty of "bail-out" points. Since most rides are two day events, a Saturday evening BBQ or banquet is very well received. If done well, dual sport rides can help present off-road motorcycle riding for what it really is: A safe, environmentally friendly, and fun way for people to enjoy the outdoors.

Equipment - Participants in dual sport rides prepare their bikes and themselves in the same way an enduro rider would. First they pack sufficient tools to make trail

side repairs and repair flat tires. Roll chart holders are required to hold and display the rally-type route instructions. Roll charts remind me of adding machine paper, with mileage, turns and other instructions printed on it. Generally, knobby tires are the best choice as they offer the best traction off-road. Dual sport rides require a street legal, quiet motorcycles. Dual sport riders are encouraged to wear motocross type gear (eg: chest protector, gloves, MX boots, off-road helmet and goggles, and knee guards). Many of the injuries I have seen are due to insufficient protective gear.

Sign-up - Each dual sport rider must go to the sign-up table, register and pick-up the roll chart for the ride. Some rides just give you the roll chart on sheets of paper, requiring you to cut and tape them together. Other rides, will give you the roll chart all ready to load into your holder. So, bring scotch tape and scissors, just in case. Many rides require the rider to show their proof of insurance and registration before sign-up.



- Most clubs and promoters ask that you show your AMA membership card. This is because AMA offers a significant number of benefits to riders, clubs and promoters. I encourage you to join AMA and support dualsporting in an effective way.

Start of the Ride - Each days ride starts early since most rides are quite long. Generally, the Saturday ride is usually eight to ten hours long. So, plan on starting as soon as you can. Riders are able to leave anytime within the start window (eg: 7AM to 9AM). Many rides have a riders meeting, just before the first riders go out, to discuss new developments or course changes. Few rides offer marked routes. At most, there are a few pieces of surveyors ribbon at key direction changes. So, many riders let a few experienced riders go first. It is a lot easier to follow another riders knobby tracks then to have to figure out every turn yourself.

The Ride - Plan on getting confused a few times during the ride. It is difficult to follow the directions on a roll chart perfectly for the entire route. You see, everyone's odometer reads differently. So, the chart may say Left Turn @ 12.735 miles, and your odometer says 12.9 where everyone is turning. Some promoters and clubs are making the ride route easier to follow by offering the route for your GPS also. Some of the fun is being able to figure out just where the route is. It is important to stick to the ride route. If you try to create your own route, and get lost or break down, odds are you will be on your own, with nobody to help you. If something happens, and you are on the ride route, other riders are usually happy to lend a hand. This is a big difference from competitive motorcycle events, where it is dog-eat-dog.

Lunch - Some rides offer lunch with the event, others plan a route past places for you to buy your own.

The Rides End - Most events expect riders to check-in at the completion of the ride. This is the way they know that all have returned.

Afterwards - Saturday night is usually where the riders get together for a BBQ or banquet to share lies about the days ride. Some events also have prizes, raffles and trophies at these gatherings. Sometimes local dealers or even manufacturers will show their products there.

Comments - Questions, e-mail me at: RL@Lemke.com



RL at Jim Pilon & Ron Loomis' Wild West 300 Dual Sport Ride

Ride Route Difficulty Descriptions

borrowed from AMA Dual Sport handbook

EASY: Usually pavement, graveled back roads, or graded fire roads passable with a pickup truck. This route may contain minor abnormalities and should be passable by all riders.

CHALLENGING: A poorly maintained dirt road. It may include up/down hills of minor difficulty. This will also include easy trails, minor washouts, road ruts, and short sections of sandwashes or muddy trails. This terrain will be passable by most, possibly at a slower pace. Passengers may have to walk in some parts.

DIFFICULT: Experienced riders who wish to ride quality terrain. May include steeper and longer up and downhill sections, this Trail/Road will lend itself to the ex-competition oriented rider. This course is NOT suitable for beginners, and passengers may have to walk some parts.

MOST DIFFICULT: Very experienced riders who wish a fully challenging type of terrain. This is recommended for the more experienced cross country riders who can handle any situation. Difficult for Dual Sport motorcycles in their stock configuration.