

# Putting The T In Touring

BY STEVE LITA  
PHOTOS BY BOB FEATHER

It's cross-country time again, which means it's time to outfit a bike for the long haul. The decisions we make before the ride can add a lot of comfort, performance, and safety to our trip. This year's victim is the venerable Honda VTX 1300T which comes right off the assembly line with many of the accoutrements one would want for a long trip. Of course, being the way we are here at the home office, nothing is complete until we've had the chance to modify it, improve it, and make it to our liking.

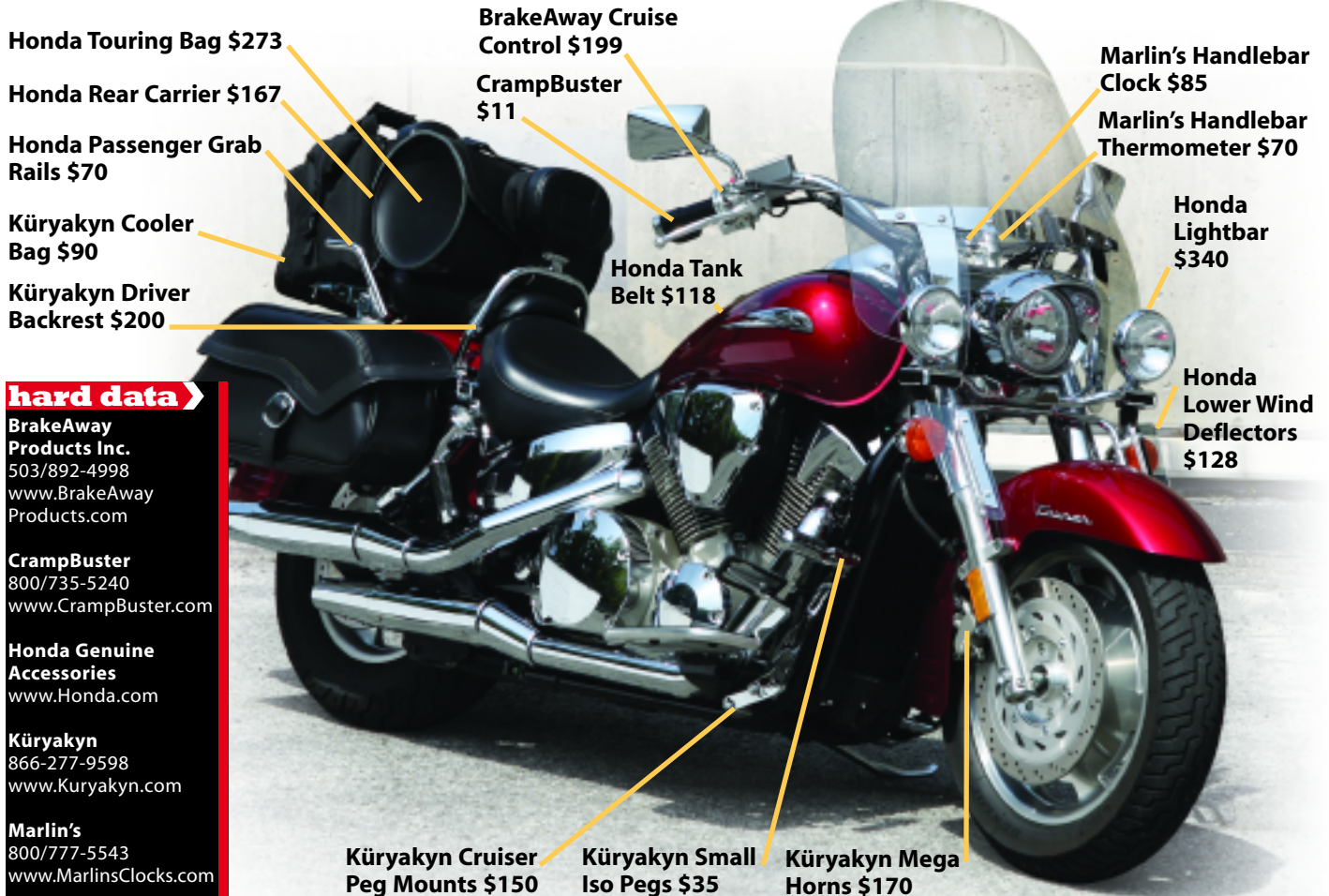
What we have here is a carefully selected group of Genuine Honda and aftermarket parts that we've bolted on and added to the existing touring package to provide greater comfort on a long trip. Be aware

that not all parts, even OEM, get along with each other. Some modifications were necessary to get certain parts to fit and work with others.

Honda gave us a good platform to start with, but some items were sorely lacking from its touring package. Lets start with the Honda OEM parts.

A touring rig wouldn't be complete without a driving lightbar. The Honda driving lightbar is very bright and provides added nighttime visibility. The activation switch is conveniently located on the left handlebar, near the switchgear. The lights do a great job of illuminating the road, but there's no indicator to tell the rider when they're on or off. And while this is obvious at night, you have no way of knowing during the day, which would come in handy. But once night falls, you can definitely tell the difference.

The Honda tank bib we installed not only protects the top of the tank, but also makes a convenient place to slide in a set of directions or notes while riding, and the snap-to-close pocket is great for a cellphone, garage



## hard data

**BrakeAway Products Inc.**  
503/892-4998  
www.BrakeAwayProducts.com

**CrampBuster**  
800/735-5240  
www.CrampBuster.com

**Honda Genuine Accessories**  
www.Honda.com

**Küryakyn**  
866-277-9598  
www.Kuryakyn.com

**Marlin's**  
800/777-5543  
www.MarlinsClocks.com



door opener, or GPS.

I like to divide my essentials among my pieces of luggage, so that the important things are always right at the top of the bag when I open it. Positioning the Honda leather luggage bag on the seat behind me allows instant access to travel essentials like a

proper tool kit and rain gear.

Although none of us on staff could feel any difference, the Honda front fork Wind Wings made a stylish addition to the bike. They continue the line of the windshield and the turn signals look cool mounted behind them.

Next we went for the Honda Traditional luggage rack, giving us a convenient place to mount a small bag or cooler. Even with its modest weight rating, the rack gives you another easy-access place to store the things you need on the road. See the Tech Tip for important ordering information.

The Honda rear passenger grab rails are not only useful when carrying a passenger, but they also provide additional tie points for luggage placed on the seat or

luggage rack. Just remove the two bolts holding the luggage rack, pop 'em on, and reinsert the same bolts. It's that easy!

Most touring riders like to know

the time and temperature as they ride. How else are you going to know that it really is 122 degrees F in Death Valley at high noon?! So we added a Marlin clock and thermometer to our VTX. The clock has a five-second backlight feature which comes in handy for nighttime viewing.

Anyone who has ever done any touring knows the value of a good cruise control. The BrakeAway cruise control unit we installed on our bike (see our October issue for complete install details) works beautifully on those long, flat stretches across the heartland. Just set your speed and push the button. The throttle is firmly held in place, yet offers just enough slippage that you can twist the grip to adjust your speed without having to release it.

For the hilly terrain and times where you need to continually make small throttle setting adjustments, I carry along a CrampBuster throttle rocker. Twist it right onto the grip and let the weight of your hand set the throttle speed. An absolute



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must for a touring rider.

Being able to stretch out those legs, changing seating positions and pressure points, goes a long way toward being comfortable on a long ride. Küryakyn highway pegs and mounts look great on the bike, and would work really well if I were another 4" taller. At 5' 11" they're just too far out front to really be useful. Next time I'll opt for the longer pegs as well. The smaller ones look great, but, hey, I wear a size 12 and I just need a little more real estate for these clodhoppers.



Nothing says "Outta my way, man" like a set of Küryakyn Mega horns! They're super loud and cause even the most comatose driver to snap out of it and realize that he doesn't own the road, he shares it. Learn how to install them on page 88 of this issue.



The adjustable Küryakyn driver backrest allows you to find just the right spot to support your lower back and add hours of riding comfort to your tour. When traveling with a duffel bag on the back seat, you've got a little something to lean on for comfort. But when there's nothing on the back seat, the backrest sure feels great. And you can stow your vehicle registration and insurance card in the secret pocket on the backside of the pad.

Having plenty of cold water on hand is essential, especially when crossing warm and arid climate zones. With a little ingenuity, the Küryakyn cooler bag keeps beverages cold in the most hostile of climates. The cooler bag is not watertight, so if you pack it with ice, it'll leak water on the rear fender. No big deal when you're cruising down the road, just messy at a stand still. I freeze one bottle of water for every trip and toss it in with the others to keep them cool. By the end of the day the frozen water is melted and ready to drink.

Now that's what we call a proper tourer. Once everything was installed, the *RoadBike* VTX1300T was a dream to drive on long trips. This one made it to the Honda Hoot (2,000 miles round trip), Americade (500 miles round trip), the AMA MotoStars exhibit grand opening (1,500 miles round trip), and it even completed a 1,000-mile-in-24-hour Iron Butt Ride attempt (more on that in the next issue). So go ahead and bolt on some touring tidbits, you'll be happy you did, in the long run.

**RB**