

Customizing your tire pressure

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Let me preface this by saying I'm not a tire expert by any means. And what I've learned about tires comes from road experience and a fair amount of reading.

First off, for the most part bike manufacturers set the pressure standard for tires on their bikes basically for a soft comfortable ride. That isn't necessarily conducive to tire longevity and handling. Proper tire pressure does 3 things. First and most important in my opinion, it allows the tire to transition properly from straight line (center portion of the tread) to leaning for turns (shoulder area tread). Too high a pressure, and the tire tends to be skittish and wants to slip sideways in the turn. Too low a pressure and the tire tends to wallow, and in a hard turn at speed can be more dangerous than a tire that wants to slip. Second, proper pressure allows good longevity of tread life, because it allows the tire to work at the operating temperature it was designed for. Third, proper pressure allows the tire give a comfortable ride.

Next, spend a few extra bucks for a good quality pressure gauge. Preferably an analogue or digital dial gauge. I've found the pencil type gauges to be off by as much as 6 psi when checking them.

As to brand of tire; these days most any of the tires on the market will get you down the road safely, and if properly inflated will give you good longevity. The secret is finding the pressure that works for your bike.

Most tires made now have a max cold inflation pressure of 40-45 psi. Unless you're riding a Gold wing with all your household furniture strapped to it, you won't need that much pressure.

What I was taught years ago, look at the bikes' owner manual for their suggested tire pressure and add 4 psi for a starting point. Then take the bike out and ride at least 3-5 miles to get the tire to operating temp. (in cold weather it will probably take 6-8 miles) Pull over and immediately

check the pressure. If the pressure has risen more than 6 psi, the tire is running too warm and you need to increase your cold temp psi. If the pressure has risen less than 3 1/2 psi, the tire is too cool, so you would decrease your cold psi.

When I started running the 404's this is the system I used, and if your wondering does it work? Well, my current set has just over 4,500 miles on them both front and rear. When new they had 11/32's of tread. I went out and measured tread depth just before I started writing this, and with 4,500 miles on them they still have 9/32's of tread left, so they've got a ways to go yet.

No matter what brand I've used over the years, I've always used this method for tire inflation. It has always allowed good handling, ride and excellent tire life.

I hope this all made sense and that it might be of help to ya'll.