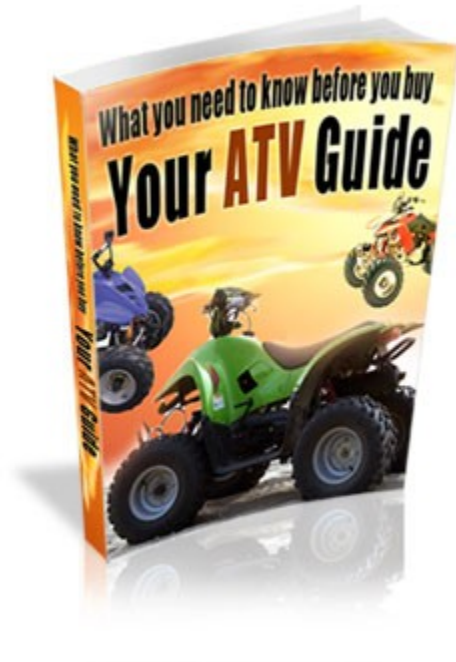


What you need to know before you buy

Your ATV Guide



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ATVs in the Making

ATV stands for "all terrain vehicles" and originated in the 50's. The early models had 6 wheels instead of the 4 that riders have now become accustomed to. The first company to make a 3-wheel ATV was Honda in 1970. These 3-wheel ATVs were used in "Diamonds are Forever" movie, which was a James Bond movie. At that time they were called US90 and had large balloon tires compared to more recent models, which use mechanical suspension and smaller tires.

ATV Changes

In 1982 Honda made the news with its landmark model Honda ATC200E Big Red! It was one of the first of its kind with its featured suspension and racks. It was the 1st utility 3-wheeled ATV to hit the market and its ability to go just about anywhere made it quite popular with the thrill ride seekers as well as the hunters.

Honda also made news when they started developing sport models! They had a virtual monopoly on the ATV market due to their patents on design and engine placement. In 1981 Honda introduced the first high performance 3-wheeler that sported full suspension, a 248 cubic centimeter 2-stroke engine, a 5-speed transmission with a manual clutch and even had front disc brakes.

If you were an ATV rider in the 1980's who liked the sporting trail, you probably would've chosen the 1983 ATC200X model which was another model in what became a landmark series of machines. This model has an easy-to-handle 192-cubic centimeter 4-stroke engine, which is make it an excellent choice for new ATV riders.

New ATV Manufacturers

Suzuki decided to give Honda some competition and was the first manufacturer to sell the 4-wheeled ATV. In 1983 Suzuki introduced the Quadrunner LT125 model, which was favored as a recreational vehicle for beginning ATV riders. In 1985 they released the first high-performance 4-wheel ATV called the LT250R Quad Racer! This model was so popular it was manufactured from 1985-1992

and even had 3 major engineering makeovers. This ATV became known as a favorite among the highly skilled riders.

The Four Trax TRX250R

Honda was not ready to give up and stepped up the competition by releasing the Four Trax TRX250R model. To date this model has never been replicated. Kawasaki then decided to they wanted a piece of the ATV action as well and released the Tecate-4-250 in 1987. Next was Yamaha who introduced a high-performance ATV called the Banshee 350.

The Banshee 350

The Banshee 350 sported a twin-cylinder 2-stroke engine from the RD350LC street motorcycle. The Banshee 350 was not a good ride in the dirt but was preferred by those who liked to ride in the sand dunes. The Banshee has been so popular that it remained available in the US until 2006. If you want the 2007 model you'll have to go to Canada to get it.

Since the ATV were first available to the general public in the 1970's they have undergone a number of mechanical as well as cosmetic changes. There are now a number of different ATV models available to meet the needs of all ATV riders.

Picking Out Your First ATV

So you've decided you want get your own ATV so you can enjoy some exciting and fun ATV adventures! However since this is a new activity for you, how do you know what ATV machine is the right one for you? What considerations to you need think about before buying? Do you need any ATV training? How much is it going to cost? These are all things that will need to be addressed before you make your purchase.

To get started you need to visit a local ATV dealership and see what they have. You can look at and try out some of the models they have on display, and also ask the salespeople questions. Don't feel bad about asking lots of questions, that's what the salespeople are there for so let them help you.

Renting an ATV

If possible it's a good idea to rent a particular model you may be interested in. This will give you an idea of how the machine feels to you, and see if it meets your needs. It also gives you the chance to see if ATV riding is really your cup of tea or not. Like anything it may sound appealing to you initially but after you experience it you may find you don't really enjoy it as much as you thought you would. If that's the case it's better to find out before you spend the money on buying it.

Types of ATVs

At this time there are two types of ATV vehicles on the market: *Sport and Utility*. There are some ATV models that claim to be hybrids of both the sport and the utility models.

A Utility ATV will have racks on both the front and rear of the vehicle, but the sport model wont have racks. A hybrid ATV may have a rack only in the rear. If you are going to use the ATV for camping trips, fishing or hunting you will want to choose a utility ATV as those activities normally involve hauling a lot of gear and

equipment around. You'll want also want the rear and front racks. If your desire is more for speed, trail riding or racing you'll want to choose a *Sport model ATV*. The sport models also come in bright colors so they show up good while riding the trails.

ATV Engines

You'll also want to consider the engine before making a decision. The 2-stroke engines are designed to lubricate themselves by burning fuel and will require a specific gas/oil mixture to run properly. There are a few models that will require you to refill the oil reservoir every 5-6 tanks of gas. The 2-stroke engines also tend to be on the noisy side and are not as popular as they once were. The newer 4-stroke engines are more fuel efficient and quieter than the 2-stroke.

Another consideration will be to decide if you want an automatic clutch or automatic transmission. Although they sound similar they are not the same thing. An automatic clutch will require you to put the ATV in the correct gear when it hits the right RPM for that gear. With an automatic transmission you must maintain a certain number of RPMs before the automatic transmission will engage. This could be present a problem if you're riding in steep rocky terrain.

2-Wheeler or 4-Wheeler

Then of course you have to decide if you want a 2-wheeler or a 4-wheeler ATV. A 2-wheeler drive has the rear wheels do all the work and move the vehicle along, where as the 4-wheeler uses all 4 wheels to get better traction. The 4-wheeler machine will cost you more but if you are going to be riding in rough terrain, you will want the extra traction.

Last but not least you'll need to choose between a drive shaft, belt or chain drive. They are all good, but having an enclosed drive shaft is a better choice for various types of terrain. The downside to a chain or belt drive is that there is always the possibility of them breaking while you're riding and that's not good.

Overall the shaft drive is your best choice and will more than pay for itself with less maintenance cost.

Learning ATV Safety

The fun of ATV trail riding has grown in popularity over the last 40 some years and is something many families can do together. Having fun riding the trails and enjoying the great outdoors can be a great way to spend a day together. However riding an ATV is not all fun and games, as you must also learn to take safety precautions. The best way to do this is to have all new ATV riders take an ATV safety course.

Since no license is required to drive an ATV, many people learn from others such as friends or family members who have experience in ATV riding. While that's not really a bad idea it's still best to take a safety course as they may inadvertently forget to mention some things that could be important to your safety.

ATV Safety Training Course

You will likely find some places near you that offer an ATV Safety Training course, but keep in mind that not all course providers will have certified trainers. The ATV safety institute (ASI) was formed in 1988 with a goal to educate riders on how to operate an ATV safely to cut down on accidents. This seems to be an effective measure as the number of ATV accidents has been greatly reduced.

Where To Find Safety Training

You will find that when you purchase an ATV most manufacturers such as Yamaha, Honda and others will provide you the opportunity to take the ATV safety course at no charge. If you don't yet own an ATV but are considering buying one, in most cases you can still take the course for just a small fee. Some of these ATV safety classes may have ATVs that have been donated to them, so you can get some actual riding experience while taking the course. You should check with the safety course instructor to see if you will need to provide your own ATV vehicle for the class or not.

The ASI course will teach you all the basics of operating an ATV and only takes about 4 hours to complete. You will learn to use the proper safety equipment, how to stop and start your vehicle safely. Once you've learned the basics you'll learn about going up and down hills and maneuvering around obstacles on a closed course. Each lesson will build on the previous one, and therefore becoming more challenging as you go along.

Who Can Take The Course

There are special classes for different age groups and even children as young as 6 can take the ASI course. The ASI instructors must complete a comprehensive training program and meet all of ASI's requirements before they are allowed to be called a 'certified instructor'. To locate a course near you check out

Making ATV Riding a Family Affair

The thrill of ATV riding has grown in popularity in recent years and some are now even making it a sporting event the whole family can participate in (depending on the age of the children). This is all well and good but of course you must make sure to take care to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

While ATV riding is fun, with it comes responsibility as well as the skill of being able to safely handle an ATV vehicle. It requires the rider to be strong, skilled and have a mature attitude. This is why in some states children younger than 16 are not allowed to drive an ATV. It also requires passengers who may be riding in the back to be older than 6 years old as well because if you are going over bumpy terrain they need to be able to hold on tight.

Avoiding Injuries

It come as no surprise that most injuries serious injuries incurred while riding an ATV are head injuries. Serious or sometimes even fatal head injuries can happen if an ATV crashes or turns over while in motion. You must also keep in mind that children can be hurt or killed when being towed by an ATV while riding a sled, tire, tube or anything else. This is why it's always important to require your children to wear helmets.

ATV Outing Preparations

You must also take precautions while preparing for your outdoor ATV adventure. For example you need to be careful when adding fuel to the ATV. You don't want anyone to get burned. You also need to exercise caution and use proper lifting techniques when loading or unloading the ATV. Be sure to check the weather forecast as well, as you don't want to be stuck outdoors in a bad storm. Make sure you are aware just how rough the terrain may be that you'll be riding on. If you are ATVing in the winter time, never take the ATV out on ice as you have no way of knowing just how much weight the ice can hold.

ATV Gear and Equipment

If your family are wintertime ATV enthusiasts you need to make sure you are equipped with the right gear and clothing. You want to wear clothing that is well insulated, and waterproof, gloves, goggles, rubber-soled boots and a helmet. You should also take flashlights, cell phone, water, snacks and place some bright colored flags on your ATV so you can be easy to spot. Someone in the group should also be able to recognize the signs of hypothermia and know how to deal with it should it occur.

You can have fun and still be safe while riding an ATV if you use common sense, act responsibly, drive carefully and follow the guidelines we've provided you with.

Healthy Snacks while on the ATV Trail

When you're out having fun on the ATV trail you're going to also want to take along some snacks to get you thru the day. When we think of snacks we most often tend to think of things like chips, cookies and soda pop, but you really need to be thinking of healthier choices if you want to keep your stamina up.

What To Drink

You don't need those sodas, juice or sports drinks to keep you going, what you really need is just plain old water! While many ATV drivers may swear those sports and energy drinks work great for them, the truth is you may be getting too much sugar with those drinks.

What To Eat

Taking along a bag of trail mix that you picked up at the store, may sound like a good idea, but when you look at all the ingredients in them you may want to think again as many of them are loaded with trans fats and excess sodium and sugar. The best way to have a healthy trail mix snack is to make your own and put it in a plastic bag. Just take about a cupful of high fiber cereal, 1/2 cup of nuts/ 1/2 cup of dried fruits such as apricots, cranberries, and raisins, and for something a little sweet, a little bit of chocolate baking chips. Shake it all up in the bag and you've got your healthy trail mix snack ready to go!

Another snack you need to choose carefully are those energy bars, as most of them are lacking in any real nutrition. However there are some out there that are designed to be meal substitutes that will be hearty enough to do give you some decent nutrition. The hearty ones will provide about 250-350 calories and a good dose of fiber as well, so choose wisely. Beware of energy bars that are mostly carbohydrates. You'll want to find the ones that provide a good balance between protein and carbs. Hint- the energy bars made by candy makers are usually loaded with far too much sweetener.

If you can find room to store a nutritious and tasty banana you definitely should do so. This often overlooked fruit is low in calories, but contains a lot of potassium and provide other healthy benefits as well. Just be sure to pack it so it doesn't get smashed along the way.

Finding a Good ATV Trail

If you're scouting for good ATV Trails, you'll find there are thousands of ATV trails all over North America, but how you can determine which ones are good ones? In this article we'll share with you some tips on what to look for in a good ATV trail.

Length of the Trail

If you're an experienced ATV rider, you'll want to scout out a trail that is pretty long. If it's too short you're likely to get bored because you'll just end up going in circles. Some ATV trails can even run a few hundred miles long. If you're new to ATV riding you'll want to start with a shorter route and build up your endurance before moving on to the bigger ones.

You'll also want to choose a trail that is a good match for your abilities. If you're a beginner you don't want to start out in some extreme mountain region or one that requires a lot of experience in ATV driving. By the same token if you're an experienced rider you'll want to find a trail that's a bit challenging for you or you won't enjoy the thrill of the ride much.

Enjoy the Scenery

One of the reasons many people like to go ATV riding is to enjoy the beautiful nature scenery along the way. So be sure to seek out some trails that have some beautiful countryside for you to see.

Ride Your ATV Where It's Allowed

If you're not sure a trail is open to ATV riders, then you need to find out for sure before venture out on your 4-wheeler. There have been way too many ATV enthusiasts that have given ATV riding a bad name by riding into areas where they are not allowed and tearing up the landscaping along the way. There are plenty of legal places you can find to ride your ATV so don't go looking for trouble, that could end up costing you some hefty fines.

When you go ATV riding be sure to take the proper gear and get a map of the trail if you're not familiar with it. It can be dangerous and scary to end up getting lost and have no idea how find your way back especially when it starts getting dark.

Last but not least, you'll want to choose a trail that is so great you want to tell all your friends other ATV riders about it.

Show Courtesy While ATVing

As with any sport or activity that involves others you must show respect and courtesy toward others. We often meet rude or inconsiderate drivers while driving our cars, and sadly the same thing can hold true for ATV drivers as well. Some of these issues involve safety while others are about sharing the trails. There are many people who disregard laws and trespass on other people's properties with their ATV machines. As a result there are now hundreds of trails designated for ATV trail riding. There are safety rules that have also been enacted to help ensure the safety of all ATV riders, but they do little good if people don't obey them.

Obeying The Rules

When driving on an ATV trail it is generally accepted to drive on the right side of the trail, so of course if you need to pass you would do so on the left side. As a courtesy you should also ask permission for the person you're passing before doing so. Be sure you can slow down considerably when approaching a curve or junction in the trail. You don't want any surprises that can result in an accident.

Be Aware of Others

You may find that other people are using the trails for other things besides ATV riding, but regardless of why others are using the trail, you must always be aware and watch and listen for others who may be in the area. For example someone may be horse riding on the same trail you're on so you'll want to always yield to them and make sure they are aware you are there so you don't spook the horse. Since ATV makes noise it's quite possible they heard you coming and have already moved a safe distance away, but if not you should shut off the motor and let the horse rider get a safe distance away before you start it up again.

It's unfortunate that the majority of responsible ATV riders have been given a bad rap based on those who riders who don't follow the rules of the trails or show courtesy to others. If you show some respect and simple courtesy toward others

and their property you will avoid any potential problems. There are plenty of legal places to ride your ATV so there's no need create trouble for yourself or others.

What ATV Trail is Right For You?

While all ATV riding is meant to be fun, this may not always be the case if you end up on a trail that's not suitable to you or your ATV vehicle. So even if someone tells you about what they think is a great trail, you should ask questions before you actually take your ATV for a ride there.

At one time most all ATV machines were built pretty similar. For example in the beginning 3-wheelers were much more common than the 4-wheeler and they were more utilitarian. However these days things have changed and now there is a big variety of ATV's for you to choose from. Now you have a lot better chance of finding one that's designed to fit your needs. However the downside to these advancements means that not all ATV's are designed for the same terrain. There are now 2 main categories of ATVs; sport or utility and they both perform very well under certain conditions.

What Type of ATV Fits Your Trail?

If you're going to riding on very rough and rocky terrain, you'll want to get a large 4 wheel drive utility quad and skid plates are recommended as well. Having a 4 wheel drive vehicle is essential for rock crawling because it's not uncommon to end up with a front or back wheel off the ground, in order to move from one rock to another. While it may be possible to prod a 2 wheeled drive sports bike over some wicked rocks, you need to take the right line thru the rocks the first time, since you won't be able go into reverse. The rigid suspension used in sport bikes also makes them that much harder to maneuver around and over big rocks. Where as with many utility quads it seems as though the tires can just reach down and grab the rocks, so you'll have more stability.

Riding the Mud Pits

If you like riding in the mud pits, you'll want to choose one of the utility quad models, as they will serve your needs well. The utility quads have extra weight and locking differentials that let the tires throw anything out of the way that it can latch onto. When crossing mud, speed is important, as you'll want to be able to

keep moving. If you stop a quad in the middle of a mud pit for any reason, you're going to need to have it towed out.

Your ATV and Sand

Another unplanned trail obstacle you may encounter is sand, especially if its sand that's found near a creek bed. You'll find unpacked sand will present a problem for most quads, unless they are handled just right. If you're going to be riding in loose sand a sport bike's lightweight will serve your needs much better than a utility bike. No matter what type of quad you may have, speed will be your best asset in getting thru sand without ending up stuck.

To sum this up, when someone mentions a great trail to you, you want to ask them questions such as what the terrain is like. Some people may consider trails that are mostly level and a few hills are great trails to ride on while others may consider the more challenging trails that have rocks, sand or mud to be a great trail. So you see it all just depends on your own likes/dislikes and what type of ATV machine you have.

How To Choose the Right ATV Helmet

You've taken the plunge and picked out just the right ATV for yourself or someone else. You test drove the machine and did your research to make sure the one you picked out is right for the way you intend to use it, however there's still one more thing you need to take care of. You now need to pick out the right clothing and safety gear to keep yourself or the person your shopping for safe. Sure you'll want some boots, jacket, gloves, pants but you can't forget about one of the most important things you'll need, and that is a good helmet.

You may think buying a helmet shouldn't be difficult but here are some things you need to consider:

How do you choose the proper fit for a helmet?

How tight should be?

How loose can it be?

Are all helmets basically the same?

Let's start with the last question first. No, helmets are not all the same. You need to choose a helmet that is especially designed for ATV or dirt bike riding. These helmets are designed differently then one for motorcycle riding.

Sizing Up The Helmets

You'll notice the difference when you look at them, because most ATV helmets will completely cover the head and will have a face guard that extends over the mouth. It may feel a bit tight when you first put it on due to all the padding. If you can put the helmet on and it doesn't feel snug, then you know it's too big. When you have the helmet on, try to shake your head side to side and also go thru some other movements so you can see if it slides or slips when you move. Does the helmet feel so heavy and cumbersome that you don't think you'll be able to stand wearing it for longer than 15 minutes without wanting to rip it off?

The helmet should not come off too easily because if it does it's not going to provide any protection in the event of accident if it flies off your head. Once you

have the helmet on you'll need to adjust the chin strap and make sure it's tight under your chin. While wearing your helmet, take hold of it from the back and try taking it off by pushing it to the front. If the helmet can slip down and come off then it's too loose. If your helmet is fitting snugly you should feel your skin shifting with the helmet when moving your head from side to side.

Helmets for Women

When choosing a helmet for a woman there are other things you need to take into consideration. The woman will need to determine how she's going to wear her hair when ATV riding because it will make a difference in the size of helmet she will need, as you must allow space for the hair.

Helmets for Kids

When it comes to buying helmets for kids, parents are often tempted to buy one a little larger, so they have room to grow, but it really is not a good idea to penny pinch when it comes to your Childs safety. As we've already described above how important it is to have a good fitting safety helmet in order to have good head protection.