

Best Cruiser Motorcycle Comfort Upgrades for Long-Distance Riding

Featured Image:



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There is a moment every long-distance rider knows well, somewhere around the third or fourth hour on the road, the seat starts to bite, the wrists ache, and the wind pushes against the chest like a wall. That moment does not have to define the ride. With the right comfort upgrades, a cruiser bike can go from a weekend machine to a true long-haul road partner.

Viking Bags, the best motorcycle luggage and aftermarket parts maker in the market today, has long understood this reality. The brand builds model-specific gear for major names like Harley-Davidson, Honda, Yamaha, and Indian, all designed around one idea: riders deserve to travel far without paying for it in pain. Whether the plan is a weekend run to the hills or a cross-country haul, the right upgrades make all the difference. Riders who invest in proper [motorcycle saddlebags](#) and other comfort-focused parts often say it feels like riding a completely different machine.

Continue reading this article to get a full, detailed breakdown of the best cruiser bike comfort upgrades for long-distance riding, from the seat all the way down to the suspension.

Best Cruiser Motorcycle Comfort Upgrades for Long-Distance Riding



Upgraded Seats

Memory foam, wider pan, split design, backrest add-ons, and gel pad seat.

Pullback risers, taller ape hangers, cushioned grips, bar-end weights.

Handlebars and Grips



Footpegs and Floorboards

Highway pegs, wider floorboards, adjustable footpeg relocation, heel-toe shifters.

Taller windshield, hand deflectors, lowers or leg wind guards.

Windshields and Wind Deflectors



Luggage and Storage

Hard saddlebags, soft throw-over saddlebags, sissy bar bags, tank bags, handlebar bags.

Progressive rate rear shocks, fork spring upgrades, preload adjusters.

Suspension Upgrades



Heated Grips and Rider Gear

Heated grips, heated seats, auxiliary lighting, USB charging ports.

Neck rolls, lumbar cushions, earplugs, and cruise control kits.

Small Additions



1. Why Comfort Matters More Than Speed on Long Rides

Most riders chase horsepower and torque numbers when shopping for a cruiser. That makes sense for the showroom floor. But on a 500-mile day, the things that matter most are not in the spec sheet.

Fatigue is the real enemy on long rides. When a rider is uncomfortable, focus drops, reaction time slows, and the risk of an error rises. Soreness in the lower back, numb hands, aching feet, these are not minor annoyances. There are safety concerns. The good news is that a cruiser is one of the most upgrade-friendly platforms on the road. With the right parts, long-distance riding becomes something to look forward to rather than something to survive.

2. Upgraded Seats: The Single Biggest Comfort Gain



The factory seat on most cruisers is built to look good and keep costs low. It is rarely built for an eight-hour ride. Swapping it out is often the fastest way to transform the riding experience.

What to look for in a touring seat:

- **Memory foam or gel inserts:** These materials reduce pressure points by spreading body weight more evenly across the seat. Standard foam compresses and hardens over time, while gel and memory foam stay adaptive for hours.
- **A wider, flatter seat pan:** A narrower seat forces the thighs into an awkward angle on long rides. A wider base supports the sit bones more naturally and reduces lower back strain.
- **Driver and passenger split design:** Two-up touring riders benefit from a seat that is shaped independently for each position. The passenger often bears the brunt of discomfort on long rides, and a contoured pillion section helps a great deal.
- **Backrest add-ons:** A driver's backrest is often overlooked, but it takes a significant load off the lower back by giving something to lean against during long, straight highway stretches.

Top brands to consider for aftermarket cruiser seats include Mustang Seats, Saddlemen, and Corbin. Each offers model-specific options for most major cruiser platforms.

3. Handlebars and Grips: Taking the Load Off the Wrists



Cruisers generally have a more relaxed riding position than sport bikes, but factory bar placement is still a compromise. For taller riders or those with longer arms, the reach can feel strained over time. For shorter riders, it can feel like a stretch.

Handlebar upgrades to consider:

- **Pullback risers:** These simple parts move the bars a few inches closer to the body and slightly upward. The result is a more upright posture that eases wrist, shoulder, and neck tension significantly. Risers are one of the most cost-effective comfort upgrades available.
- **Taller ape hangers or mini-apes:** These give a more laid-back feel, though the right height varies by rider. Too high and the arms fatigue quickly. A modest rise of 4 to 8 inches tends to work well for highway riding.
- **Cushioned grips or throttle bosses:** Handlebar grips take constant vibration and pass it straight into the palms. Gel-core grips or foam-padded grips absorb much of that buzz. A throttle boss (a small lever that holds throttle position without gripping) is a game-changer on long highway sections.
- **Bar-end weights:** Vibration from the engine travels through the frame and into the bars. Bar-end weights add mass at the ends of the handlebars and damp out a surprising amount of that vibration.

4. Footpegs and Floorboards: Rethinking the Lower Body



Feet and legs are often the forgotten zone when planning comfort upgrades. After hours in the saddle, foot placement matters enormously.

Upgrades that help:

- **Highway pegs or crash bar pegs:** These allow the legs to stretch out forward during highway cruising, changing the leg angle and relieving knee and hip pressure. Most cruisers with engine guards or crash bars can accept bolt-on highway pegs without modification.
- **Wider floorboards:** For bikes already equipped with floorboards, an upgrade to a wider or rubber-isolated board reduces vibration felt through the feet. This may sound minor, but over six or eight hours, it adds up considerably.
- **Adjustable footpeg relocation kits:** These kits allow forward or rearward placement of the foot controls to match the rider's leg length more precisely. A proper fit reduces the cramping sensation that builds up in the calves and knees.
- **Heel-toe shifters:** A heel-toe lever allows gear changes with either the toe or the heel, which means the foot does not have to move off the

peg. It keeps the foot more relaxed and reduces ankle fatigue on longer rides.

5. Windshields and Wind Deflectors: Fighting Wind Fatigue



Wind fatigue is real, and it is cumulative. Pushing against wind pressure at highway speed for several hours drains energy fast, creates neck tension, and can leave ears ringing at the end of the day.

What works for wind protection on cruisers:

- **A taller aftermarket windshield:** A stock windshield, if the bike has one, is often too short for effective wind management. An aftermarket unit that directs airflow just above or around the helmet reduces the

constant pushing sensation dramatically. Memphis Shades, National Cycle, and Klock Werks make well-regarded options.

- **Hand deflectors or wind wings:** These smaller deflectors mount at the bar ends or mirror stalks and push wind away from the hands and forearms. They are especially useful in cooler conditions.
- **Lowers or leg wind guards:** These bolt-on panels (common on touring-oriented cruisers) block wind from the legs. Combined with a taller windshield, they can transform a raw wind experience into something far more composed.

6. Luggage and Storage: Carrying Gear the Right Way



Improperly loaded luggage changes a bike's handling, adds stress to the frame, and forces riders to pack light when they should not have to. For long-distance riding, smart storage is not optional.

Viking Bags, the best motorcycle saddlebag and luggage maker on the market, builds purpose-made bags for cruisers that fit flush with the bike, do not obstruct the rear wheel, and are made from materials that hold up to weather and road wear. Their [model-specific cruiser motorcycle luggage bags](#) are engineered for major platforms like Harley-Davidson Softail and Sportster models, Honda Shadow and Rebel, Yamaha V-Star, and Indian Scout and Chief, among others.

Types of luggage to consider for long-distance cruiser riding:

- **Hard saddlebags:** Viking's hard saddlebags offer a lockable, waterproof storage solution that mounts cleanly to the rear of the bike. These are ideal for valuables, documents, and items that need to stay dry regardless of the weather. Viking hard bags are built from ABS plastic shells with secure latching systems and often include built-in LED lighting for an upgraded look.
- **Soft throw-over saddlebags:** For riders who want a cleaner look or occasional touring flexibility, Viking's soft saddlebags offer a lighter, easier-to-remove option. They are made from PU leather or water-resistant synthetic materials and sized to fit most cruiser rear fenders without interfering with the wheel or exhaust.
- **Sissy bar bags and tail bags:** These mount to the rear rack or sissy bar and give extra carrying capacity for sleeping gear, clothing, or rain suits. Viking's sissy bar bags are available in multiple sizes and connect securely without shifting on the road.
- **Tank bags:** A tank bag keeps frequently needed items within reach, such as maps, snacks, a phone, and a camera. Viking offers magnetic and strap-on options sized for various tank shapes.
- **Handlebar bags and fork bags:** Often overlooked, these small bags add accessibility for gloves, a wallet, or a multi-tool without requiring a stop to open the main bags.

Evenly distributing weight across saddlebags, a sissy bar bag, and a tank bag keeps the bike stable and predictable, which matters enormously over long mileage.

7. Suspension Upgrades: What the Road Feels Like Matters

A stock cruiser suspension is set up for the average rider on moderate roads. For a loaded touring run on patchy pavement, it often leaves something to be desired.

Suspension improvements worth making:

- **Progressive rate rear shocks:** Aftermarket shocks from brands like Öhlins, Progressive Suspension, or Legend Suspensions allow adjustment of spring preload to compensate for a loaded bike. They also typically offer better damping than OEM units. A bike that handles its own weight well stays composed through rough patches and keeps fatigue low.
- **Fork spring upgrades:** The front forks on many cruisers are set up on the soft side, which means they dive under braking. A stiffer fork spring kit (installed by a qualified mechanic) gives a more controlled feel and better road feedback.
- **Preload adjusters:** Some aftermarket shocks include easy-access preload rings that let the rider adjust stiffness based on load, solo versus two-up, lightly packed versus fully loaded. This tunability is valuable on multi-day trips where the kit changes day to day.

8. Heated Grips and Rider Gear: Managing the Elements

Cold hands are dangerous hands. Temperature regulation on long rides is a genuine safety matter, not just a comfort preference.

Bike upgrades for better safety and comfort:

- **Heated grips:** Aftermarket or OEM heated grips run off the bike's electrical system and give riders fine-tuned control over hand temperature. Oxford, Koso, and Symtec make reliable kits that work across most cruiser platforms. Warm hands grip better, react faster, and tire less quickly.
- **Heated seats:** A heated seat takes the chill off the lower body during cold-morning starts. Some seats come with heating built in, while others accept retrofit heating pads.
- **Auxiliary lighting:** Visibility and eye strain are comfort factors, too. Upgraded LED auxiliary lights improve road illumination and reduce the strain of riding in low-light conditions. Viking makes auxiliary lighting options that integrate cleanly with major cruiser models.
- **USB or 12V charging ports:** Keeping a phone charged for navigation is a basic touring need. A properly wired USB port or accessory socket takes care of this cleanly without running wires to the battery.

9. Small Additions That Make a Big Difference

Not every upgrade needs to be major. Some of the best comfort gains come from small, often overlooked changes.

- **Neck rolls and lumbar cushions:** A small inflatable lumbar support tucked behind the lower back on the seat makes a big difference on straight highway sections.
- **Earplugs or custom molded ear protection:** Wind noise causes real fatigue. Even simple foam earplugs reduce the noise load that builds up over hours of highway riding.
- **Cruise control kits:** Aftermarket cruise control systems or throttle locks reduce hand and wrist fatigue on long, consistent highway stretches significantly.
- **Gel seat pads:** For riders not ready to replace the seat entirely, a gel seat pad that sits over the stock seat gives a noticeable pressure reduction and is easy to remove after the ride. If you ride a Harley Softail, Street Bob, or the Indian Scout models, Viking Bags makes the best motorcycle gel seat for long-distance comfort.

10. Final Thoughts

Long-distance cruiser riding is one of the most rewarding things a person can do on two wheels. The open road, the rhythm of the engine, the changing scenery, it never gets old. But none of it is enjoyable when the body is screaming for a break after two hours.

The upgrades covered in this guide, from the seat to the suspension, from heated grips to smart luggage, work together to reduce fatigue, improve control, and make the miles pass with ease rather than discomfort. Not every upgrade is needed all at once. Start with what hurts most (usually the seat and the wind), then work outward.

And when it comes to carrying gear, Viking Bags remains the best motorcycle luggage brand for cruiser riders who want storage that fits right, holds up over time, and does not compromise how the bike looks or handles. Visit vikingbags.com to explore the full range of model-specific saddlebags, sissy bar bags, tank bags, and aftermarket accessories built for the way riders actually ride.

The road is long. Riding it in comfort is a choice worth making.