

# Road Trip

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## SATURATE BEFORE USING: IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT, TRY A CLASSIC COOLING VEST

ONE OF THE THINGS WE SHARE is an aversion to the heat. Yet there we were, about to embark on a long trip in the dog days of summer through the merciless Mojave Desert on our way to New Mexico—in a record-breaking heat wave no less. Even though we started early to get through the desert oven before the sun started baking the asphalt, by 8 a.m., the temperature was already approaching 100 degrees. By ten, the heat was brutal.

A few hours in that sweltering landscape—let alone the eight or so hours it would take us to reach our destination—could prove exceedingly dangerous. Not only does that kind of heat sap stamina, corrode concentration, and derail judgment, it can cause muscle cramps, irritability, and dehydration. The body's reaction to these extremes in temperature can escalate before symptoms seem severe enough to prompt attention. Without recognition and treatment, it can progress to heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and, in the worst of cases, death.

According to Nancy Keen, an avid motorcyclist and cofounder of Silver Eagle Outfitters, a maker of products to protect against heat stress, "The motorcycle rider is being physically challenged by the ambient temperature plus direct sunlight, as well as the

radiant heat generated from the road and the bike. This can make riding on an 80-degree day feel like riding on a 105-degree day."

Imagine what it can do on a 115-degree day. The mercury on the thermometer reached those punishing heights by noon on the day of our journey. Buffeted by a constant



wind that sucked the moisture out of our skin and depleted our energy, we knew that a day in this climate would be an invitation to heat stroke. What better time to put Silver Eagle's New Generation Classic Cooling vests to the test.

We pulled into the welcome shade of a rest stop and began to activate the vests. If you've ever used Shake n' Bake, you know the concept. Take a large plastic bag, put the vest in it, and pour in the water. It takes just a few minutes for the vest to absorb all the liquid.

"When we get on a motorcycle, anything that goes down below our waists, down around our hips, automatically pushes up and everything rides up with it. Therefore, we tried to make the woman's vest so that it fits the average women, tapering properly at the waist so that when she sits down, it stays there and doesn't creep up." She's quite right. The vest stays comfortably in place.

Silver Eagle didn't forget attention to style. "We're built differently, but we still want to look good. We don't want to look like we have a life jacket on," Keen says. The vest is simplistically stylish enough to be inconspicuous. I even wore mine while walking around town one hot afternoon. I'm quite certain that without it, the heat would have marred or cut short my sightseeing adventure.

We were surprised at how comfortable the soaked vests were. Because they're not drippy, they can be worn underneath leathers, as long as the jackets have a mesh that allows for some airflow or you open the zipper and flaps.

Making an already good product better, Silver Eagle retooled its flagship product using high-performance fabrics and updating the design for improved comfort and fit. Unlike other cooling products that rely on ice packs, phase change materials, or granules that bulk up the fabric to make you feel like the Michelin Man, Silver Eagle's vests are thin and lightweight, even when saturated. And unlike those other products, they don't require access to refrigeration, coolers, or electricity. They're activated by water alone, and can be dunked in a sink, held under a faucet, or soaked in a plastic bag. A small baggy of water—less than the amount in a small sports bottle—is enough to do the job and get you to the next rest stop or fueling station in comfort. The water is held and gradually released through evaporation from special fibers inside the three-layer fabric composite. The inner, water-resistant lining draws moisture and heat away from your body.

The products are designed to remain activated for two to eight hours, depending on the environmental conditions. In an atmosphere as extreme as that in which we tested

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them, the vests needed to be refilled at the very low end of that spectrum.

The cooling garments, which are available in Classic Black or Santa Fe Silver in sizes from small to 4XL, are well cut and constructed from quality materials. The outer shell is made from durable DuPont Cordura, with a waterproof binding. A Teflon HT fabric protector in the inner lining helps repel water and allows the vests to stand up to repeated machine washing and tumble drying. Inside pockets are made from the same water-repellent fabric, giving you protected storage space for your small pocket items.

Not just a smaller knock-off of the man's vest, the woman's version has been carefully tailored to fit a woman's shape. Says Keen,

While the vests do a great job of keeping you cool, they're also useful for keeping you warm when they're worn dry or under a jacket. And because they're so lightweight, they take up very little room in your saddlebag or top box.

At \$95, the Silver Eagle Classic Cooling Vests are a great investment that will extend your ride on long days and protect you against the potentially devastating and sometimes deadly effects of heat stress. It's an essential piece of equipment for every serious traveling motorcyclist.

The Classic Cooling Vests are available directly from Silver Eagle Outfitters. To order these products, call 888.672.6963, or visit the company's web site, [CoolingApparel.com](http://CoolingApparel.com).

—K.J. & G.D.