

Women Riders Now

Honda Silver Wing: The Touring Scooter

Los Angeles to Vegas on a maxi scooter

Story and photos by Sarah Schilke

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My friends thought I was crazy when I told them I was going to ride a scooter to Las Vegas to attend my first scooter rally. "That will take forever!" and "You won't be able to take any stuff with you!" and "You'll get blown all over the road!" they said. Honda proves them all wrong with the Silver Wing rightfully touting it as a 'touring machine that just happens to be a scooter.



Sarah rides the Honda Silver Wing, a scooter that performs as well as a long-distance tourer as an around town scoot. With a 600cc class automatic engine and \$8,499 price tag, it's the ultimate deal for anyone searching for a scooter that can do it all.

When I first picked up the Silver Wing, I took it on a glorious sunny jaunt through the oceanside scenery of Palos Verdes, California. I was immediately impressed with how light and nimble the Silver Wing felt through the rolling twisties. At a standstill the scoot looks big; and thinking about the 582cc parallel-twin automatic engine hidden in the bodywork, one might expect the 540-pound machine to handle heavily, especially in low-speed technical sections or around town. The Silver Wing turns out to be a fantastic all-around ride, accelerating aggressively off stoplights, yet still sailing nimbly through the curves. Thanks to Honda's V-Matic continuously variable transmission (CVT), the automatic shifting is so smooth you never feel the scooter transitioning between gears. Just twist the throttle and glide smoothly up to the speed limit.



At 5 feet 5 inches, Sarah had no problem solidly planting both foot when stopping.



Since she rides towards the rear of the seat, at stops she just scootched forward a bit to put both feet firmly on the ground.

Although the sun was out in full force in the city, the coast was socked in with cloudy mist -- not exactly optimum weather for riding in mesh summer gear. The Honda folks had easily rigged up the Silver Wing with an electric vest jack which came in handy later. For this short jaunt I didn't need it because the wind tunnel designed windshield and the large front fairing provided ample coverage to keep me warm.

Once I got home I faced the task of packing five days' worth of Vegas luggage for travel on a scooter. This was no simple task for someone who loves to travel with as many shoes as possible, but again, the Silver Wing was up to the challenge. With ample under-seat storage (55 liters!), a generous passenger seat, and some extra storage

spaces in the dash, I was able to pack more than I could have carried on had I flown to Vegas. I was even able to take extra luxuries like four pairs of shoes, my electric vest (just in case), a bottle of wine, a hair dryer, my laptop, and water and snacks for the road.

A feature that a passenger will appreciate is the adjustable backrest that can be moved to one of five different positions over a 2-inch range.



The Silver Wing boasts an extraordinary amount of storage, great for going grocery shopping or heading out on a long trip. You can fit two helmets (or the equivalent volume of stuff) under the seat in a lockable compartment. The seat opens to the front and is held open by a hydraulic damper for easy loading.



There are two storage units on the dash. Sarah fit a camera and her purse into the side on the left that locks.



The passenger seat is big and there are plenty of places to anchor bungee cords to secure even a large duffel bag. The rear swingarm features dual hydraulic shocks with a five-position spring preload adjustability (up to 4.5 inches travel) so you can carry or stow seriously heavy loads without disrupting the suspension balance.

I will admit, even I had some doubts about riding a scooter all the way to Vegas. I mean 300 miles is nothing to sneeze at if you can't go the speed limit and are uncomfortable or wind-blown the whole way. But as I set out in perfect weather conditions and hit the freeway, I knew it was going to be a very comfortable ride. The Silver Wing was plush and, with an indicated top speed of 120, the scooter handled freeway speeds with ease. I often found myself accelerating so quickly (and smoothly thanks to the V-Matic automatic transmission) that I'd be riding over the speed limit. No matter, the Silver Wing's combined braking system, which distributes braking force between the front and rear wheels, smoothes out even the most abrupt braking situations when you find yourself going just a bit too fast. I did get a rush when I passed a corvette on my scooter. Honda offers an ABS option that adds \$500 to the price.



Sarah was able to ride in many positions on her 300-mile ride, from the "metropolitan" stance in this photo with knees bent at a 90-degree angle. to...



...this position, the "chopper" stance with legs forward a bit.



She could even stretch out her legs all the way. The ability to change leg positions and scoot around in the large saddle made for an extremely comfortable ride.



Much of the time Sarah rode like this, one leg bent, one leg straight out. It was most comfortable for her.

The ride back home wasn't quite so glamorous. With 60 mile-an-hour desert winds and a near-freezing wind chill, I was a worried about the things my friends warned me about before I took the trip. I plugged in my electric vest, threw on my rain suit for wind protection and hit the road. Sixty mile-per-hour winds are a little freaky even if you're in a car, so it wasn't the most pleasant ride home. However, the Silver Wing felt solid and required little extra handling to keep it from blowing around in my lane. I stopped about every 100 miles to warm up and calm my nerves although the Silver Wing didn't demand refueling until well over 150 miles.



This is the new color for 2009, candy dark red. Sarah tested a 2008 model in metallic gray

Finally past the worst of the dramatic desert conditions, I stretched out, twisted the throttle and eased into more scootin' bliss. Once I arrived home I dumped my luggage and did a quick run to the grocery store. The Silver Wing more than proved itself as a comfortable, reliable long-haul touring machine. Then it did a quick change as the perfect around-town shopping alternative to a car. It can scoot and it can tour; talk about a perfect combination.

Specs at a Glance: 2009 Honda Silver Wing

Engine Type: 582cc liquid-cooled four-stroke parallel-twin

Seat Height: 29.7 inches

Fuel Capacity: 4.2 gallons, including 0.9-gallon reserve

Weight: 540 pounds; 551 pounds w/ABS

New color for 09: Candy Dark Red

MSRP: Starts at \$8,499 (ABS option adds \$500)

WRN Recommendation:

The Honda Silver Wing is a sleek and fun all-in-one scooter. Riders will enjoy its convenient comfort for anything from a quick scoot around town to a long highway adventure. In addition to plenty of storage, 150-plus miles between fill-ups, and do-it-all versatility, the \$8,499 price tag is a fair price. We recommend this for beginning motorcyclists ready to trade up to a bigger ride, but who don't want to deal with shifting. Even veteran motorcyclists can appreciate the ease of handling and ample storage. As for scooter enthusiasts, those looking for a solid touring scooter will love the Silver Wing.

Sarah Schilke is an avid street and dirt motorcyclist who is newly pursuing her interest in scooters. She runs her own marketing consulting agency, Motoniche.com, is a lifetime [AMA](#) member and is the first woman to be elected to the Board of Directors of the [Motorcycle Industry Council](#).



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