

# Harley Davidson: King of Motorcycles

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Harley Davidson. The name means motorcycles. In business for over a hundred years, the company is universally acknowledged as the manufacturer of some of the world's finest motorcycles, and justly so.

Beginning in the mind of William Harley and the backyard of his friend, Arthur Davidson, the pair created a 'motorized bicycle' that has evolved into the standard for fine two-wheeled transportation.

Founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, their first bike didn't even have enough power to make it up the small hills of the town without pedal assistance. The pair were undaunted. Within a few years they were producing vehicles for the military fighting WWI and it's been the standard for military and police bikes ever since.

From 50 motorcycles produced at the original factory in 1906, the company has grown to produce millions that are sold around the world.

'Harley', 'Choppers', 'Hogs' and other nicknames became attached over the years. Choppers are bikes that have a front fork angle extended, moving the handlebars back. 'Hogs' came into being when live pigs were ridden around on the back seat after winning a race. But whatever you call them, Harley Davidson motorcycles - with the exception of a short-lived hiccup in the 1970s - have always been the gold standard of bikes.

Their large, powerful engines and distinctive pipe sounds make them recognizable before they even round the corner. Seeing one cements the impression that the viewer is watching greatness drive by.

They figure prominently in the major rallies, the Daytona in Florida in March, the Laconia in New Hampshire in June and the Sturgis in South Dakota in August. Thousands of Harley owners attend and there are inevitably a few dropped jaws at the sight of some of the customized versions.

The Harley Owners Group, H.O.G., founded in 1983, now has over 1,000 chapters with over a million members worldwide. Many don't even own a bike. But the passion for this exemplar of motorcycle engineering is the same, even so. You don't have to own a Rolls Royce to appreciate one as an example of excellence in motoring design.

Beyond the bikes themselves, there are co-branded jackets, helmets and hundreds more items carrying the Harley Davidson winged emblem recognized the world over. Though they contribute a modest percentage to the over \$5 billion in annual revenue, the advertising is priceless. As if anyone needed to be told that Harley Davidson makes motorcycles!

There are thousands of Harley Davidson forums online - three times as many as there are for Yamaha. One of the few serious competitors for the crown of motorcycle design. BMW, Victory, Honda... many strive - some come close - but Harley Davidson remains the champion. A title they are unlikely to relinquish anytime soon.

After all, there's only room for one at the summit of the tallest peak. You can learn more about Motorcycles at Motorcycling