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Celebrating “Motorcycle Month”

Once again this summer, events were held all over Japan in celebration of “Motorcycle Month,” launched in July 2000 as a way to heighten understanding of the pleasures of motorcycling. Events are held from July through September, centering on “Motorcycle Day” (established by the central government’s former Management and Coordination Agency) on August 19 to promote road safety and accident reduction while emphasizing the usefulness and fun of motorcycles.

Motorcycle Month is organized through the efforts of numerous organizations including the Nippon Motorcycle Association (NMCA), the Motorcycle Federation of Japan (MFJ), the Japan Mini Vehicles Association, the Motorcycle Safety Association, the Japan Traffic Safety Association, the Japan Automobile Recycling Promotion Center (JARC) and the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA).

Events are aimed at motorcycle license holders and the unlicensed alike, and, as in the case of the “Motorcycle Sports School for Boys and Girls,” even for elementary schoolchildren.

Since 2002, Motorcycle Month “ambassadors” have been appointed to promote the merits of motorcycle riding. Former Grand Prix rider Tadahiko Taira and talent celebrity Christelle Ciari took on this role in 2008, promoting the enjoyment and convenience of motorcycling at events around the country.

Events across Japan

Motorcycle Month 2008 drew many participants to its nationwide celebrations which, in addition to motorcycle races and shows, featured parades and touring events in which users could participate on their own bikes. These activities proved extremely popular, attracting hundreds and sometimes even thousands of motorcyclists.

Various events held this year during Motorcycle Month are described below.

Promoting a Manufacturing Town through Motorcycling Events

On August 30 and 31, the city of Hamamatsu held its *Baiku no furusato* (A Biking Hometown) *Hamamatsu 2008* program of festivities to help promote the city. This marked the sixth time these festivities have been held. Taking place in Hamamatsu’s industrial exhibition hall and drawing about 31,500 participants from within and also outside the prefecture, events included contests and workshops as well as concept bike and racing machine displays and moderator-led discussions on

motorcycle issues.



The Hamamatsu Commercial and Industrial Commission explained that these activities are intended “to promote Hamamatsu as a city with strong roots in motorcycle manufacturing, and demonstrate the appeal of *monozukuri*” (loosely translated, ‘the spirit of craftsmanship’). They are implemented with the support of NMCA and of Japan’s four motorcycle manufacturers: Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha.

Many participants make sure to come to the festivities on their own motorcycles, and this year more than 4,000 bikers showed up for the fun.

Promoting Road Safety with a 550-Member Motorcycle Parade

Every year the Young Entrepreneurs Group of the city of Suzuka’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry organizes a summertime *Baiku de aitai* (Bikers’ Get-Together) parade to coincide with Suzuka’s annual 8-Hour World Endurance Championship Race for motorcycles. The bikers roll in a convoy through the heart of the city in a road safety-promoting initiative.



The event was held this year on July 26, with 550 motorcyclists participating in the parade and Suzuka residents turning out all along its route to take in the sight.

The parade is led by the motorcycle corps of the local police and follows a leisurely 5-kilometer course to the Suzuka auto-racing circuit, ending with a final lap around

this internationally renowned speedway. As night falls, the event closes with a party to celebrate the next day's start of the eight-hour championship race.

1,500 Riders Join Tour around Mountain Resort Area

The *Moto Paradise Kanto* is a large-scale overnight touring event in which riders from around the Kanto region participate, gathering for a night's stay at a venue provided by the organizers where they can enjoy a concert and "talk shows" during the respite between the two-day tour. The Naeba Prince Hotel in Niigata Prefecture hosted the event this year on September 13, which drew roughly 1,500 participants.



Organized by the Kanto Motorcycle Association as part of its general activities, the 2008 tour marked the fifteenth time this event has been held. Its purpose is not only to provide riders with a unique opportunity to take their motorcycles out on the road, but also to promote awareness of safe riding practices. This year's venue offered test rides on new models and hands-on motorcycling experience for kids, thereby drawing a growing number of families to the event.

Manabu Sakurai of the Kanto Motorcycle Association explains that "This event involves motorcycle dealers from nine prefectures in and around the Kanto region and from metropolitan Tokyo and is specifically aimed at providing their customers with a chance to enjoy touring."

The Tokyo motorcycle dealership Autoshop Yamanaka is a regular participant in the event. Owner Kimiko Yamanaka says, "We're just a small business, so it's very important for us to maintain relationships with our customers. We had 10 people take part in this year's tour. It's nice that we don't have any organizational responsibilities ourselves, so we can relax and enjoy the event along with our customers, which makes it a great way to spend time together."

By encouraging users to get the most out of their bikes and through its support of dealer activities, this two-day touring and activity program also serves the motorcycle industry in its own promotion of the two-wheeler market.

600 Motorcyclists Participate in Beach Clean-Up

Organized and run by motorcyclists 11 times over the past five years, the *Love the Earth Meeting* is a biker-focused event whose aim is to contribute to society through environmental protection initiatives.

Each event is promoted in motorcycling magazines and on the Internet with announcements of meeting sites at bathing beaches and other coastal locations. Riders gather together in this all-volunteer effort to collect litter and other debris in order to keep beaches clean.



The most recent beach clean-up was held in a coastal park in the city of Makinohara, Shizuoka Prefecture. Despite the rain, some 600 riders from around the country showed up and spent two hours clearing refuse from the dunes.

Love the Earth's Executive Committee chairman Akihiro Kitamura says, "Our hope is that this activity will encourage more riders to practice environmental responsibility and actually help protect the environment in their everyday lives."

With a current meeting membership of more than 7,300 riders, the number of participants in this truly worthwhile event increases each time it is held, to the credit of the motorcycling community nationwide.

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