



THE WAY I SEE IT by Genevieve Schmitt

Year of the Woman Rider

To be among a large group of women who share the same passion is energizing.

I'VE BEEN COVERING THE WOMEN AND MOTORCYCLING beat for more than a decade, and there have never been more women-oriented motorcycle events held all in one year. Here's a list of the leading medium-to-large scale women biker rallies.

In March, Harley-Davidson held its annual Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) Women's Ride during Daytona Bike Week. Details were announced too late to promote here, but every Tuesday of Bike Week for the last few years, the Motor Company has teamed with the MDA to hold a fund-raising ride. The ride's pretty short (about 10 miles), but the fun happens during the staging time when women kick the tires with other women, share recommendations on riding gear, and meet new friends. Make a mental note for next year.

Friday, May 4, is International Female Ride Day (www.Motoress.com), a dedicated time when women from all over the globe ride to bring awareness to the growing number of female riders. Since its inception six years ago, the movement has grown with riders gathering in groups to do a day ride in support of this.

By the time you read this, all the spots might be taken for an all-women's motorcycle tour of Brazil (www.CompassExpeditions.com) led by adventure rider/author Lois Pryce. This incredible 13-day tour starts May 22. This is one of those trips of a lifetime.

Entering its third year is Bikes, Babes, and Bling, a regional rally taking place June 8-10 in Fayetteville, Arkansas. It's the sister rally of Bikes, Blues, and BBQs, which attracts 40,000 people, and focuses on providing a fun experience where women can come together to share their love of motorcycling.

For years, I've been getting the

word out about three regional women's rallies that have been going on long before "women and motorcycling" was a coined phrase. First is the Mid-Atlantic Women's Motorcycle Rally (www.MAWMR.org) taking place in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. To celebrate its 20th year, it's making a new push to attract women from all over. It runs June 21-23 and raises funds for breast cancer research.

Now in its 26th year (wow!) is the Ladies Run of Colorado, (www.LadiesRun.com), a one-day event that takes place in the tiny mountain town of Fairplay, Colorado, on July 14. While it was started by women for women riders, men have always been invited. It's a laid-back afternoon spent in the splendor of a wide-open, high alpine space where the local merchants lay out the welcome mat along with a handful of vendors who line the streets.

The following week, July 20-22, is the North Dakota Ladies Run (www.NDLadiesRun.org) in Wahpeton, North Dakota, celebrating its 25th anniversary. With the heightened interest by women riders to attend female riding events, perhaps this and the other two long-standing regional rallies will attract a new crop of riders this year.

Next is the event women from around the world have been anticipating for three years, ever since the last one. It's the largest of all the women's rallies, the International Women and Motorcycling Conference (IWMC) (www.WomenAndMotorcycling.com) organized by the American Motor-

cyclist Association. Located in Carson City, Nevada, it's held July 26-29. It's a week before Sturgis, so you could attend both back to back. I'm already mentally gearing up for this motorcycle rally marathon, as I'll have a booth at the women's conference representing my online magazine, WomenRidersNow.com. Organizers hope to grow attendance to 2,000 riders this year.

Last is the Biker Belles (www.BikerBelles.com) ride, an event that started last year during the Sturgis Rally and did well enough for organizers to hold it again. It's a one-day ride and reception on Wednesday, August 8, starting at The Lodge in Deadwood, South Dakota, and ending at the Buffalo Chip campground. Entry price was doubled this year from \$75 to \$150, which I hope doesn't adversely affect attendance; however, it does include the concert at the Chip that evening. One hundred percent of funds raised goes to the chosen charities.

If you've made it to the end of this article and you're a guy, you might be asking, "What's up with all these ladies' rallies? How come we don't have a men's rally?" You do! Sturgis, Laconia, Daytona — they're mostly all men, at least from my perspective. It's refreshing to have an event where women dominate. Plus, as cool as it is to see a large group of women riders go by, it's just as cool for us women to be a part of that. Many ladies ride regularly with either men or a small group of women. To be among a large group of women who share the same passion is energizing. I started out riding with men back in 1990. There's a different energy riding with all women, and for a day or two, that's nice to experience.

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