

“Motorbike Months” ~ Enhancing Motorcycle Safety and Image -- Summer Events Organized Through Industry-Wide Cooperation --

The Japanese motorcycle industry has designated the three summer months of July, August and September, a time each year characterized by brisk motorcycle touring and racing activities, as “Motorbike Months,” with various related events held throughout Japan.

“Motorbike Months” was originally launched in 2000 as a means of familiarizing the public with the enjoyment, usefulness and convenience of motorcycles. The Nippon MotorCycle Association (NMCA)¹ plays the focal role in organizing these events, with JAMA and other motorcycle industry bodies, as well as Japan’s four motorcycle manufacturers (Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha), dealers and other members of the industry also teaming up to sponsor the various activities and gatherings.

This year marked the fifth summer that Motorbike Months was held, with regional events and campaigns strengthened and Tokyo-based activities put on to generate appeal for non-riders and other members of the general public. Below, we introduce a few of the many events held during Motorbike Months this year.

“Motorcycles Are Nice in Kobe” (August 8)

Kobe suffered severe damage when it was struck by the Great Hanshin Earthquake in January of 1995. Traffic on major trunk routes was badly disrupted, with major problems encountered in transporting relief supplies. Coming to the rescue at that critical time were motorcycles, which could travel down roads where regular automobiles were unable to pass due to obstructions or congestion. This event was held at a wharf in Kobe and organized by the local chapter of the Japan Rescue Support Motorbike Network – a voluntary organization that played a key role in mounting response to the '95 quake. Featured were explanations of the mission and the significance of motorcycles during disasters, as well as demonstrations of how these vehicles are put to use in dealing with crisis situations.

The Kobe event also included the “Children’s Motor Sports School,” enabling elementary school students to cultivate the spirit of challenge and learn how to follow traffic rules through direct experiences with motorcycles, as well as a “Traffic Safety Parade” mobilizing about 100 motorcycles to help spread traffic safety knowledge and compliance. Japan’s four motorcycle manufacturers also pitched in with motorcycle exhibitions and riding simulators that helped visitors understand the motorcycle experience. A talk show featuring motorcycle enthusiasts was staged and other interesting events presented.



Explanations of the mission and significance of motorcycles during disasters, presented by the Kobe local chapter of the Japan Rescue Support Motorbike Network.



Demonstrating how motorcycles can support rescue and support operations during disasters.



The "Children's Motor Sports School" was offered to develop familiarity with motorcycles from the early years on.



The "Traffic Safety Parade" appealed for efforts to expand safe driving knowledge and practices.

"Hamamatsu ~ Motorbike Birthplace" (August 21-22)

Hamamatsu is the true birthplace of the motorcycle in Japan, with the motorcycle products of Suzuki, Honda and Yamaha all originating in this vibrant region. Living up to this legacy, this event featured the "Motorcycle Hometown and History" exhibition, showcasing famous motorcycles and racing machines from the 1960s up to the current day.

Another attraction was "Bike Forum in Hamamatsu," a talk show with four celebrities who discussed the appeal of motorcycles. The venue was packed by motorcycle fans to standing room only status. Another attraction was the "Traffic Safety Declaration Parade Run," a procession of around 100 motorcycles organized to appeal for safe riding practices and improved road manners, starting from the city office and moving through the city to the event site. At the site itself, a demonstration using trial models was held, with super riding techniques by riders able to maneuver these machines with full and fluent command earning shouts of awe and delight from the crowd.



“Motorcycle Test Riding Event for Primary Schoolers” with many participants



“Traffic Safety Declaration Parade Run,” organized to appeal for safe riding practices and improved road manners



“Motorcycle Hometown and History” exhibition with famous motorcycles and racing machines



Talk show with TV personalities, former GP racer and motor journalist

Numerous other events were also held around the country during the Motorbike Months. Staged in the Chubu region of central Japan, for example, was “2004 Bike Mileage in Chubu,” with participants competing for deluxe prizes based on mileage covered and number of times taking part in the event. The first prize in this contest was a liquid crystal television, with the second place finisher taking home a digital camera and the third place winner a DVD player.

The trendy Shinjuku quarter of Tokyo was the site of the August 19 “Motorcycle Fashions for Two” fashion show, yet another event aimed at generating appeal for motorcycles among non-users. Twelve couples passing the initial screening appeared decked out in specially designed motorbike fashions, together with motorcycles of course, for the final judging. The creations of the winners may be viewed on the following website.

http://www.bike-gekkkan.jp/whats/report/2004/040819_bfa_final.html

(⁴): NMCA was established in 1997, with Japan’s four domestic motorcycle manufacturers acting as the originators. The Association is currently comprised of motorcycle users, enthusiasts, dealers, distributors and manufacturers, and seeks to contribute to society by promoting a wide range of motorcycle related themes. This includes the pursuit of motorcycle recreation and potential uses, improving the motorcycle use environment, enhancing the social image of motorcycles, promoting resource conservation, environmental protection and other causes.