

## Motorcycles

The first known motorcycles were developed in Germany in 1885 by brothers Heinrich and Wilhelm Hildebrand, and their friend, Alois Wolfmuller. About 10 years after they began development, they decided to produce motorcycles in quantity to sell to the public.

America got into the motorcycle-building business in the early 1900s when Milwaukee resident William S. Harley and his buddy, Arthur Davidson, began experimenting with attaching engines to bicycles. Their company was Harley-Davidson. At one time, there were more than a hundred companies in the United States producing motorcycles; nearly all have gone out of business except Harley-Davidson.

Japan's Soichiro Honda began producing small motorcycles in the late 1940s, but they weren't imported to the United States until 10 years later. Honda motorcycles became very popular in this country, as did motorcycles produced by Yamaha and Harley-Davidson.

More than a thousand motorcycle clubs exist in the United States alone. In addition to their use for pleasure, police and military personnel also use motorcycles. In fact, during World Wars I and II, motorcycles were used as a way to carry military secrets.

America's number one celebration of motorcycling may very well be the Black Hills Motor Classic held every August in Sturgis, South Dakota. The giant motorcycle rally brings tens of thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts to the town.

Sturgis is a small community of only about 6,000 people. Its residents and those of nearby towns enjoy the annual visit by the motorcyclists, who spend money at local hotels, motels, restaurants, and shops. The gathering includes motorcycle

## Unit 6

displays, races, concerts, tours of the area, and other events. In 1990, about 300,000 bikers came to Sturgis to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Motor Classic.

- Laws requiring cyclists to wear helmets or seat belts have been greeted by the medical community with much acclaim. What do you think about such laws?
  
- With its population increased dramatically during August, life in Sturgis can get pretty hectic. What problems do you think the residents might face?
  
- If you were thinking about buying a motorcycle, what would you need to investigate before you made your decision?