



FredRau Motorcycling

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Harley Owners Group – State Rallies

by GOMO

I have mentioned before that I prefer small venues when it comes to motorcycle rallies. Heading to the big events like Daytona, Laconia or Sturgis is

always a good time, but the large crowds, gouging of hotel rooms, long lines for food or to even try a demo bike is a bit too much for me after a short time, and starts to take away from

some of the joy I expect from a rally. Probably the biggest rally I attend on a regular basis is the Americade Touring Rally in Lake George, NY during the first week of June each year. After that I usually concentrate on heading to smaller ones to fill my rally needs.

Like many of you, with it being the beginning of the year I am making my plans for the riding season of 2010. With the so-so season we had in the Northeast in 2009 with all the rain, I am certainly looking forward to a better year of riding. So along with road trips,

the rallies come into the picture again for the planning stage. One of the small rallies I will be attending this year again is the New York State H.O.G. Rally in Syracuse, NY.

Every year members of State H.O.G. chapters put together a team of volunteers and submit a proposal to the rest of the H.O.G. Chapters within the state for a bid to host a state rally. All the proposals are presented and reviewed by the Chapter Officers as a group and then voted on. Once the decision is made, the winning team of officer's have a lot of

work ahead of them to organize the rally. In 2009 there were 47 individual State Rallies (the most to date) with more than 40,000 people attending them. Sure, that number of people is even less than what attends a single Americade, but that's what I like.



Now, when you think of motorcycle rallies, the H.O.G. State Rallies may not be what you think of. If your idea of a rally includes lots of vendor shopping, parties that last into the next morning, and thousands of folks and bikes just hanging out; then these may not be

for you. H.O.G. State Rallies usually work around an attendance of anywhere from 800 to 2000 people, normally members of that state's local chapters. When it comes to vendors, since this event is run by H.O.G. and Harley-Davidson, the amount of vendors that



are available to sell merchandise that is not the same as Harley's is limited. Yes, there are some vendors at each rally, but you can walk through the lot normally in about 30 minutes to check them out. And when it comes to those parties, you have to remember you are

dealing with Chapter H.O.G. members; most of them don't stay up that late. Besides, it cuts into their riding time the next day. So why would anybody want to go to one, you may ask?

Like I said, these rallies are not what most peo-



ple consider a rally to be. Yes, there is entertainment scheduled, bike games are also available to sign up for, as well as bike shows with awards. You have to also remember that with are dealing with Harley riders here, so food is also part of the equation and BBQ's or

other dinners can be had. The big draw for me is to head to a region where I may have not ridden before. The Rally Committee spends a lot of time putting together lead rides as well as self-guided tours throughout the area. Some rides are purely scenic

while some lead you to a destination to check out a local attraction. The 2009 NYS Rally was held in Binghamton, and they had rides to a speaker factory, horse racing, the local attraction of old carousels, the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown and more. The self-guided routes were set on some fantastic roads in the eastern part of the NY Fingerlake Region and northern Pennsylvania. Besides the riding and activities the rally had, there was also a motorcycle stunt show to enjoy.

The evenings had en-

tertainment with music and comedians, of course food, and the camaraderie of H.O.G. members from throughout the state and a few from states far away. The camaraderie is a big one here. Normally a group of members from local chapters head up together and spend the time hanging out with each other. This is where some partying comes in; members hang out in the evening at their hotels and mix and mingle with each other and meet other members from other chapters that are staying at the same place. It's always a fun time.



In New York the rally is always in a different section of the state each year, which gives you the opportunity to visit and ride someplace you may have yet to venture to. Some states have their rally in the same place each year, which also works well. The Rally Committee for the 2009 NYS H.O.G. Rally did a great job organizing the event. You need to remember that everything that is done to put this event together is all volunteered time. The money collected from the registrations is used as the seed money to get things

rolling for the next year's event. For a small group of volunteers to put on an event that includes entertainment, bike games, prizes, rides and more and to have it come off successfully is a testament to the passion these H.O.G. volunteers have to riding and the joy that comes with it. These rallies are the type that are what you make of them. If you plan on enjoying yourself with friends new and old, looking forward to riding new destinations and taking in what is to offer you'll have a great time (like the majority do). But if you think

you are going to head there and expect the atmosphere related to one of the big rallies you will probably be disappointed.

For me, the H.O.G. State Rallies work great. Reasonable room prices, the chance to adventure on new roads both alone and with my fellow H.O.G. buddies, and to be able to share and enjoy the stories of journeys from the past and hear of new ones makes for a great time. The Rallies normally are scheduled from a Thursday to Sunday morning, which in most cases give you suffi-

cient travel time to head back home to get ready for your next planned trip. Never attended one? Small and personal sound good to you? Well head on over to www.hog.com and click on the state rallies link for more information.



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