



2015 GOLD WING

TOURING SERIES





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INTRODUCTION

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Long live the King

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What the motorcycle press has had to say about the Gold Wing over the years



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2015 Honda Gold Wing

HAPPY 40TH BIRTHDAY, GOLD WING. LONG LIVE THE KING.

The Gold Wing was destined to rule from the very beginning, with Honda dubbing the 1975 GL1000 the King of Motorcycles even before its introduction, predicting that the model would stand above all others. The nickname proved to be prescient, though even Honda couldn't have guessed how iconic the bike would become, or even exactly how it would be used. Soon enough, though, the company learned from its own customers (the majority of whom were in the U.S.) that the GL had invented the concept of luxury motorcycle touring as we now know it, eventually prompting author Darwin Holmstrom to come up with a Gold Wing moniker of his own: "the ultimate two-wheeled mileage disposal unit." With its legendary status came added impetus, and while the evolutionary process has brought countless updates and improvements across the four decades since the GL1000's introduction, today's GL1800 continues to serve as the benchmark against which all touring models are measured.



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EDITORIAL NARRATIVES & ASSETS

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Editorial Narratives & Assets

INTERVIEWS AND TOOLS

HEAD TO HEAD: HOW DOES THE ORIGINAL HONDA GOLD WING MEASURE UP TO THE NEWEST EDITION?

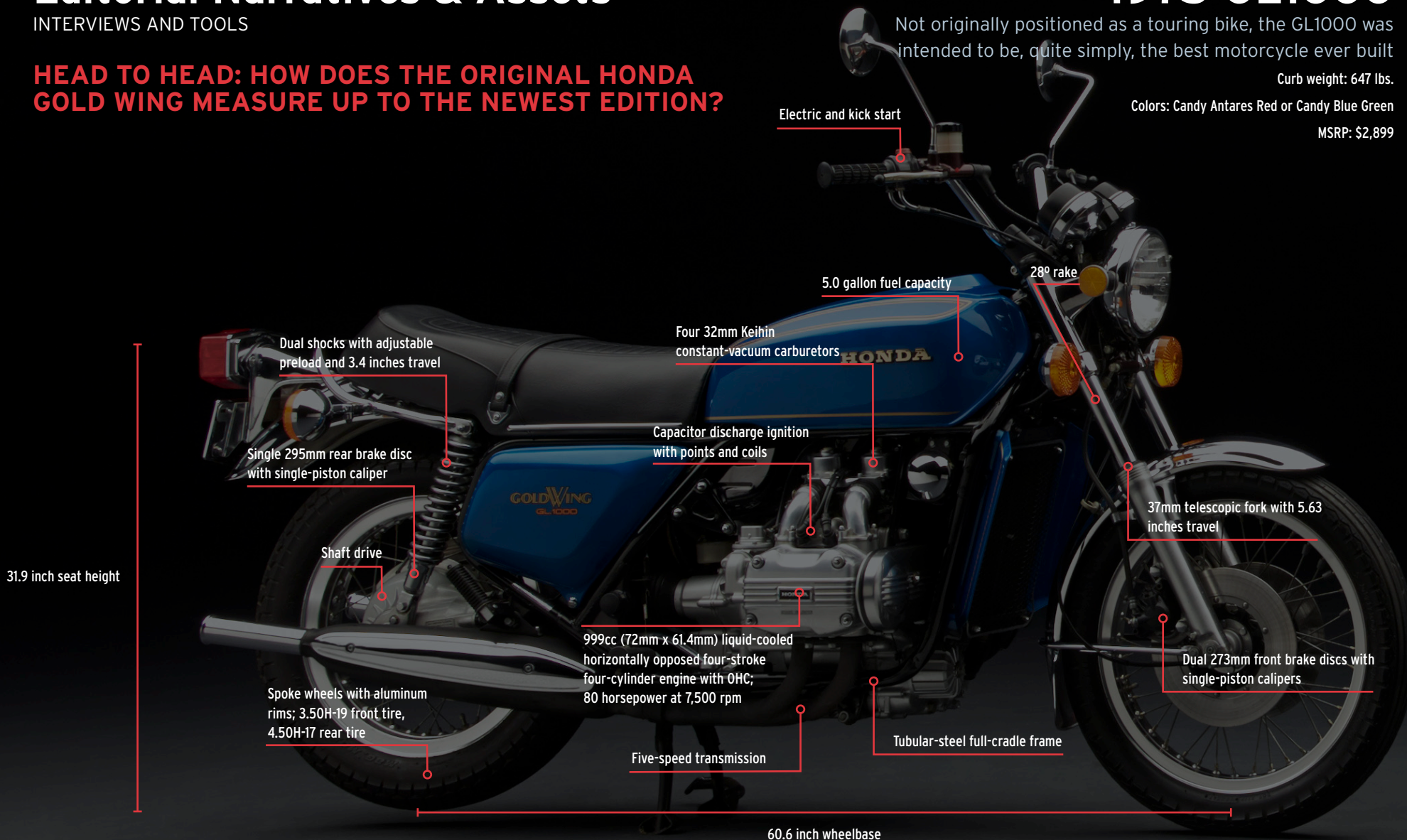
1975 GL1000

Not originally positioned as a touring bike, the GL1000 was intended to be, quite simply, the best motorcycle ever built

Curb weight: 647 lbs.

Colors: Candy Antares Red or Candy Blue Green

MSRP: \$2,899



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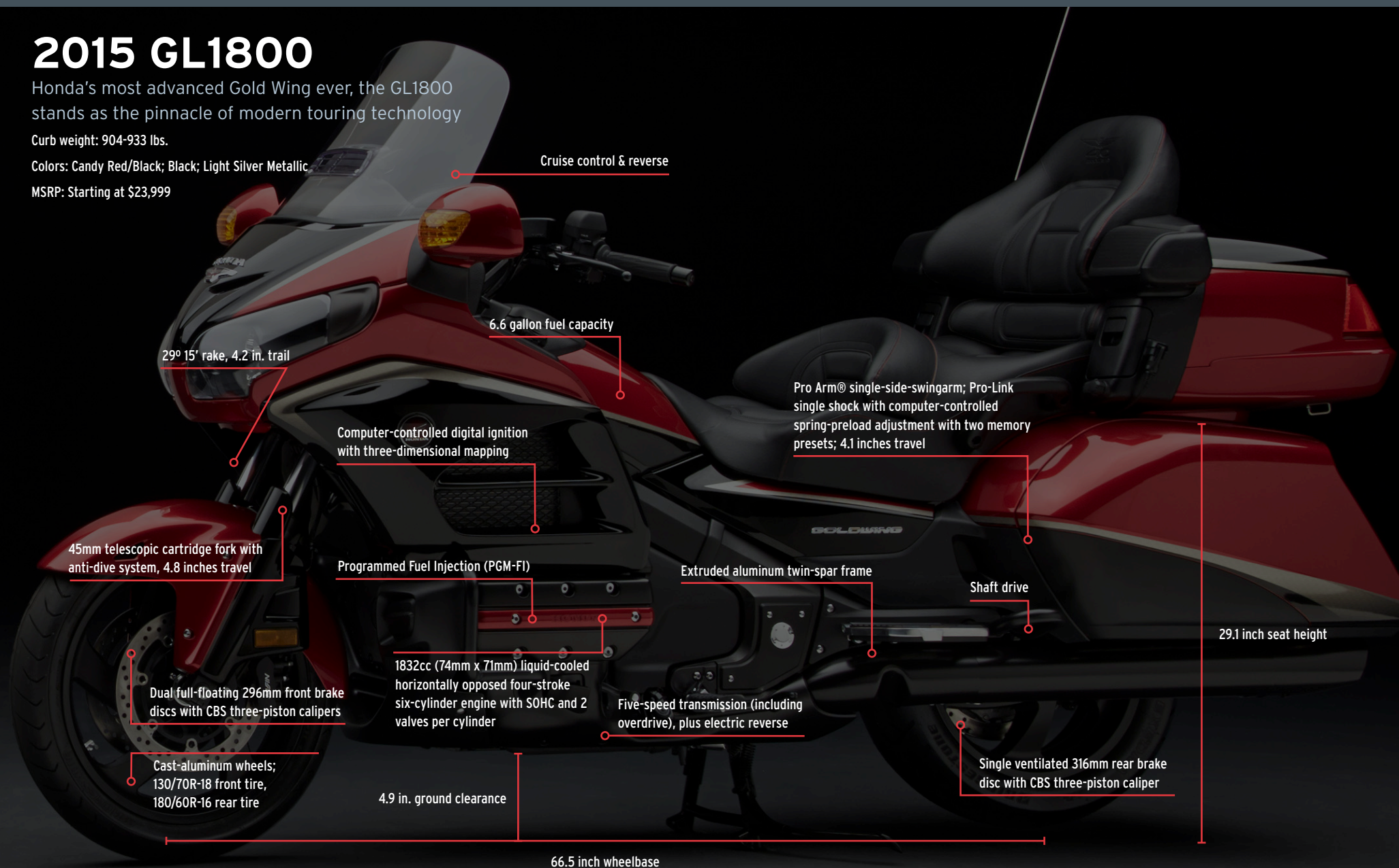
2015 GL1800

Honda's most advanced Gold Wing ever, the GL1800 stands as the pinnacle of modern touring technology

Curb weight: 904-933 lbs.

Colors: Candy Red/Black; Black; Light Silver Metallic

MSRP: Starting at \$23,999





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THE AMERICAN GOLD WING STORY: MOTORCYCLE MEETS NATION

Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie... and Gold Wings



Ever since it was introduced four decades ago, Honda's Gold Wing has enjoyed a special connection with American riders, with 4,000 of the 5,000 units sold in 1975 going to U.S. residents. Although that total didn't meet expectations, Honda was soon selling 25,000 Gold Wings per year, 80 percent of which were purchased in

North America. Through the years, the Gold Wing has often been one of the company's top sellers in the U.S., and its luxurious Aspencade version was even named after a popular New Mexico touring rally.



1972

A team led by Soichiro Irimajiri develops the M1 prototype (also known as Project 371), a flat-six, 1470cc precursor of the Gold Wing.



1974

The first Gold Wing—the 1975 GL1000 KO—makes its public debut at the Cologne Show in Germany. Developed by Toshio Nozue (also responsible for the CB750), the model is dubbed “the ultimate motorcycle” by Honda.

What is it about the Gold Wing that fits so well with the United States? It could be the fact that the bike is so well suited to the country's vast spaces and wide-open roadways, or perhaps it's Americans' affection for accessories, which are certainly plentiful for the GL line. The truth is that it's likely a combination of those factors and more.

Honda has always recognized this important cultural link, even sending two Gold Wing large project leaders—Shuji Tanaka in the late '70s and Masanori Aoki in the mid '90s—to the U.S. to live, log miles aboard Gold Wings, attend touring rallies, meet owners and learn American customers' requirements. “Our original target range was 234 miles on one tank of fuel,” said Aoki after the introduction of his 2001 GL1800, “but we're getting more than that now. I know that number very well; there are many gas stations between California and New York, but I was touring on the Trans-Alaskan Highway between Anchorage and Seattle, and there aren't many stations out there.”

So perfect for the country is the Gold Wing that it was even produced in Marysville, Ohio, between 1980 and 2010.

1977

Rider passion quickly emerges as the GWRRA (Gold Wing Road Riders Association) is founded in Phoenix.

1978

The first edition of Wing Ding touring rally is held in Phoenix.

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THE GOLD WING FAITHFUL

The GWRRA unites Gold Wing riders from all over the world



Perhaps more than any other single motorcycle model, Honda's Gold Wing has fostered its own, dedicated culture, evidenced by the vibrant club scene that the model has inspired. Examples include the Gold Wing Touring Association, the American Gold Wing Association and the Gold Wing Road Riders Association, the latter billing itself as "the world's largest single-marque social organization for owners and riders of Honda Gold

Wing/Valkyrie motorcycles." Founded in 1977 by Phoenix-based Gold Wing owner Paul Hildebrand, the club counted 12 charter members, but membership has since expanded to over 60,000, organized in 628 chapters in 52 countries. The growth has been remarkable, but the common bond remains the same: "The members all share a passion for motorcycle touring," says Abel Gallardo, the GWRRA's current president*.

*GWRRA spokespersons are available for interviews.



"These people just want to ride, and they want to ride together. That pride of ownership that they share is quite unique, and they're not shy about expanding their social circles. It's based on the commonality that they all ride the same brand and flagship."

The GWRRA publishes its own magazine—*Wing World*—and organizes an annual four-day convention called Wing Ding. The event, which includes motorcycle rides, a trade show, social events and more, has moved around the U.S. over the last 36 years, with next year's edition scheduled for September 3-6 in Huntsville, Ala.

Subscribing to the motto *friends for fun, safety and knowledge*, the GWRRA assigns every chapter a highly trained local educator who leads safety days at association gatherings, and its clean-cut members are the ultimate ambassadors, fueling their get-togethers with goodwill and ice cream—not exactly your stereotypical motorcycle gang!

1979

On June 10, Honda opens its \$50 million, 260,000 sq/ft USA production facility in Marysville, OH, where the following model year's Gold Wing would be produced.



1980

Honda produces the all-new Gold Wing GL1100. Among the many changes are a longer wheelbase, electronic ignition, increased fuel capacity and lighter weight.

On May 1, Honda's Marysville Motorcycle Plant produces its first Gold Wing.

1981

Hoping to expand the touring experience to a new demographic of riders, Honda offers the GL500 Silver Wing.



1982

Honda introduces a luxurious Aspencade version of the GL1100, featuring two-tone paint and all of the updates from the Interstate.

Engineering Spotlight

BLAZING TRAIL ON THE HIGHWAY

In motorcycling, technological advancement is typically associated with the sport segment, but since day one, the Gold Wing touring bike has served as a vehicle for technical breakthroughs. Today, it's easy to take many of these innovations for granted, but that only speaks to how effectively Honda engineers worked on the Gold Wing, making subsequent large-scale adoption an easy and obvious choice.

ENGINE

- **Architecture:** From the first model year, the GL's alternator was used as a counter-rotating flywheel, canceling torque reaction of the inline crankshaft. An opposed engine layout provided perfect balance, and smoothness and quietness were even better with the '88 touring-focused six-cylinder engine, which drew on Honda's automotive division, with the transmission's cluster gears integral with the mainshaft, and three main bearings on the crankshaft. In addition, the original, 1975 GL1000 was the first mass-produced street bike to feature liquid cooling.

- **Transmission:** The GL has always carried its gearbox under the engine, contributing to the bike's famous low center of gravity. With the introduction of the six-cylinder power plant came a 1 mph electric reverse gear that was operated by the starter motor.
- **Drivetrain:** The '75 GL1000 was the first production Honda motorcycle (and first non-European production bike) with shaft final drive. Its rubber-toothed belt camshaft drive was also different from most motorcycle engines.
- **Emissions:** The 2001 GL1800 was one of the most environmentally responsible large-capacity motorcycles available, with oxygen sensors in each exhaust pipe and a pair of exhaust catalysts.

CHASSIS

- **Fuel cell:** To keep weight placed low in the chassis, the 1975 GL1000 carried its fuel under the seat (where it has remained ever since), leaving the faux fuel tank to serve as storage space and house electrical components. The arrangement was rare for production motorcycles, and combined with the flat-four engine, made for a very low center of gravity.
- **Bodywork:** The GL1100 Interstate came standard with an aesthetically integrated, frame-mounted fairing, as well as saddlebags and a touring trunk. It also featured an adjustable windshield made from scratch- and shatter-resistant polycarbonate rather than the more typical unmodified acrylic. The Gold Wing has also broken boundaries in terms of luggage capacity, with the '84 edition able to hold two helmets and the '01 offering an amazing 147 liters of storage space. The

1983

The American Gold Wing Association is founded.



1984

Honda produces the all-new GL1200, which has a stiffer frame, repositioned engine, smaller wheels, longer wheelbase and swingarm and upgraded suspension.

1985

Honda commemorates 25 years in America and ten years of Gold Wing motorcycles with the GL1200L Limited Edition.

The naked version of the GL1200 is discontinued.

Honda opens an engine plant in Anna, OH, where GL engines would eventually be produced.

1987

The Gold Wing Touring Association is founded.

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fairing and luggage of the '85 GL1200 were developed in a wind tunnel, whereas that of the '88 GL1500 was amazingly comprehensive, even including heater vents routing warm air to the feet. In 2006, the GL1800 housed the world's first motorcycle airbag.

- **Brakes:** When the Gold Wing was introduced, rear disc brakes were somewhat of a novelty, and even front discs were relatively innovative, particularly for a touring motorcycle. Also groundbreaking for the time was the now-standard mounting of the calipers on the rear of the fork legs, simplifying wheel removal and positioning weight closer to the steering centerline. In 1983, the GL1100 debuted unified braking and Honda's advanced TRAC (Torque Reactive Anti-Dive Control) braking system.
- **Suspension:** For the first time on a production bike, the '82 Aspencade featured an on-bike air compressor for adjusting suspension via a button positioned on the faux fuel tank. Three years later, the compressor on the GL's Limited Edition version also enabled auto-leveling rear suspension in order to maintain correct ride height regardless of varying load sizes.

ELECTRONICS

- **Audio system:** Gold Wing sound systems have often outpaced those of contemporary automobiles in terms of features. The Interstate version of the 1980 GL1100 featured an optional stereo/intercom system with signal-seeking tuning. The '82 Aspencade version offered a stereo with a remote, handlebar-mounted station selector and a 40-channel CB transceiver—unheard of at the

time. Two years later, the Aspencade's stereo boasted automatic volume control that compensated for road speed, and in '86 Dolby noise reduction was added, with an optional skip-proof six-CD changer coming in 2001. XM Satellite Radio was added in '09, and the system became iPod-compatible in '12.

- **Dash:** In '83, the Aspencade was equipped with an advanced liquid-crystal instrument panel, which included a speedometer, odometer (with count-down option), tachometer (with choice between digital or graph readouts), fuel gauge, engine-temperature gauge, service light and suspension-pressure gauge. The '84 Limited Edition was the first Gold Wing with electronic cruise control, its system featuring no fewer than 13 fail-safe cutoff mechanisms. One year later, the GL version included a travel computer that provided a plethora of data, including a map of the U.S. that enabled automatic time-zone adjustment. The '06 model year brought in-dash GPS, heated seat and handgrips and an optional airbag; and a Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) came in '09.
- **Engine management:** The '88 GL1500 came with a sophisticated electronic engine-management system that monitored air and engine temperature, altitude, gear, rpm and manifold pressure.
- **Lighting:** The original GL broke ground with its audible indicator alarm, and in 1981, the signals were self-canceling, thanks to a sophisticated, super-sensitive, computer-controlled system.



1988

The Gold Wing grows two cylinders and is introduced as the all-new flat-six GL1500. Highlights include a smoother transmission, increased fuel capacity, stiffer chassis, improved brakes and comprehensive fairing.

1989

The Pacific Coast, a mid-displacement Gold Wing spinoff featuring automotive-influenced styling, is introduced.

1993

Large project leader Masanori Aoki moves to the U.S. for three years to learn English and study the Gold Wing culture prior to developing the 2001 GL1800.

1996

On July 26, the Marysville plant produces its 1 millionth U.S.-built Honda—a Gold Wing.

Building Character **OWNER PERSPECTIVE: MEET A GOLD WING ENTHUSIAST**

Earl Greenstreet knows what he likes when he sees it, and the Dallas resident has liked the Gold Wing from day one. The 63-year-old currently owns a 2013 GL1800 (his "fifth or sixth" Gold Wing), as well as Honda Rune, Shadow and 919 models. His wife Michelle is also an avid rider, both with her own Honda Rebel and DN-01, and as a passenger on the couple's GL. Earl spoke about his long relationship with the Gold Wing brand.



DESCRIBE YOUR FIRST GOLD WING EXPERIENCE.

I was introduced to Gold Wings in the late 1970s. One of my buddies was a police officer, and he had a 1978 GL1000. I was taken aback by it, and I ended up buying it. It was just a bare Gold Wing with no fairing, but I did add an aftermarket fairing and bags. I only put around 5,000 miles on that bike. I've always been a motorcyclist that likes big-displacement motors, and the Gold Wing was a big bike for the time. During my lifetime, I've had between 25 and 30 motorcycles, and the Gold Wing is my favorite by far, mainly due to its comfort and all the accessories that you can get to go with that bike.

1997

Honda introduces the Valkyrie, a high-performance cruiser based on the GL1500 chassis.

2000

Coinciding with the Gold Wing's 25th anniversary, GL engine production is moved from Anna, OH, back to Marysville.



2001

Debut of the sensational GL1800. Developed under Masanori Aoki, it brought fuel injection, an aluminum frame and optional ABS braking to the Gold Wing, and it had 20 patents for technological innovations.



2012

The Gold Wing gets a new look and production moves to Kumamoto, Japan.

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HOW MUCH DO YOU RIDE THESE DAYS?

On average, I probably put 20,000 miles per year on my Gold Wing, and another 20,000 on the rest of my bikes. I like to ride motorcycles, and now that I'm retired, I ride motorcycles all the time! The longest tour I did was right around 8,000 miles, leaving here in Dallas and making my way all through the Midwestern states, up to Seattle, then down the California coast, then back through Nevada and New Mexico. It was a three-week trip.

The last trip I took was from Dallas to Key West. It was a really interesting adventure. I'm the type of person that just gets on his motorcycle, and I don't know where I'm going to land. If I feel like riding late, I'll ride late, but if I feel like getting off the road at 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I'll do that.

I've had so many exciting adventures throughout my years of riding, and that's because you get to do what you want when you're on a motorcycle—smell the roses, as they say. Every time you go through a different climate or area, the smell is different. The air is different. The temperature is different.

"That's what makes motorcycling an exciting adventure for me."

I was a big-mile rider from the start, and my first year and a half of riding, I went to 44 states—not all at once, but I'd go to the East Coast, then to the West Coast, visiting different friends and family along the way. You see the motorcycle magazines write about the ten best roads in America, and I've been on all of them.

WHAT MAKES GL RIDERS UNIQUE?

Number one, Gold Wing riders are more conscious of the safety aspect with motorcycles. I think they're friendly, and they enjoy riding and meeting up with other people. They like to talk about their adventures and their motorcycles and all the personalization they've done to the bikes. It's a really good group of people.

Greenstreet and other Gold Wing owners are available for interviews.



2013

Honda releases the F6B, a lighter, trimmer, meaner version of the Gold Wing.



2014

Honda reintroduces the powerful Valkyrie, the ultimate cruiser.



2015

Honda celebrates the Gold Wing's 40th birthday.



Golden Words

WHAT THE MOTORCYCLE PRESS HAS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE GOLD WING OVER THE YEARS.

"Honda's ultimate touring masterpiece will take off on a trip all its own, pioneering a sophisticated concept yet untouched but soon to be pursued by those destined to follow the leader."

Motorcyclist, December 1974

"The introduction of the model marks an even more significant milestone [than the CB750]. Quite suddenly motorcycling has taken a gigantic leap forward."

Two Wheels (Australia), July 1975

"And here, by God, is a tourer, unblurred and brilliantly focused."

Cycle, April 1975

"While gazing at car passengers a realization hits you: you're more comfortable than they are."

Cycle, January 1980

"A nimbleness previously unknown to the touring fraternity."

Cycle, January 1985

"Everything prior to [1982] will be backdated as Before Aspencade, and everything following year one will be considered After Aspencade."

Darwin Holmstrom, Honda Gold Wing





Resources

ENTHUSIASM FOR THIS PRODUCT HAS BUILT STEADILY OVER FOUR DECADES. FOR INSPIRATION AND FODDER FOR GREAT STORIES, CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING:

Gold Wing: The First 20 Years
Editor in Chief, Ken Vreeke
American Honda Motor Co., Inc., 1994

Honda Gold Wing
By Darwin Holmstrom
Whitehorse Press, 2000

Honda Gold Wing
By Ian Falloon
Haynes, 2001

Wing World magazine
GWRRA

www.world.honda.com/goldwing/history
www.gwrro.org
www.goldwingworld.com
www.goldwingfacts.com





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