

# GREEN MOUNTAIN Glory

**H.O.G.'S IRON ADVENTURE RUN**  
BY GLEN ABBOTT

CRUISING SOUTH ON U.S. 7 FROM BURLINGTON, THE SCENE IS PICTURE-POSTCARD PERFECT. THE SETTING SUN BATHES GRAIN SILOS AND WEATHER-BEATEN BARNs IN A HAZY GOLDEN LIGHT. HERDS OF DAIRY CATTLE GRAZE GREEN FIELDS. THE SCENT OF FRESHLY CUT GRASS PERMEATES THE EARLY-EVENING AIR, AND GENTLY ROLLING HILLS HOLD THE PROMISE OF GREAT RIDING IN THE DAYS TO COME.





## VERT MONT

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I'M heading to Ludlow, in Vermont's south-central Okemo Valley region, for the Harley Owners Group® inaugural Iron Adventure Run. At this blissful moment, however, it's just me, my Road Glide®, and a whole bunch of contented-looking cows.

### GREEN MOUNTAIN GLORY

The Green Mountain State seems to be made for motorcycling. "Bikers love Vermont because it's so beautiful here. No billboards, no streetlights. It's just nature at its purest," explains Marji Graf of the Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce. I'd have been surprised if she'd said any different, but it's a sentiment echoed by riders as well. "It was on our bucket list to come over to the East Coast," says Clara Walker of Eva, Illinois. "So we went to Maine for three days and saw the coast, and we saw this on the Internet and decided to do it." Clara and husband Jeff are proud owners of a striking two-tone, Deep Turquoise and Antique White 2009 Ultra Classic.®

"The scenery, the ride, the camaraderie," says Jeff, explaining the lure of the Iron Adventure Run. "We actually have been H.O.G. members for several years, but we've never been to a H.O.G. event, and thought we could combine two things with one – seeing the Northeast, and getting involved with a H.O.G. event."

The first Iron Adventure Run represents an experiment of sorts for H.O.G., rolled out during the Group's 30<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary year. Incorporating rallies from five northeastern states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont), it's the first time a U.S. H.O.G. event has been open to all makes and riders. "We're trying to lift the veil," explains Val Ledterman, eastern regional manager for Harley Owners Group. "To showcase what H.O.G. is all about, what Harley-Davidson is all about, and the brother-and-sisterhood that we all have, so that other people want to join in."

Understandably, there are those who feel H.O.G. events should be limited to

Harley® riders (as most are), but Iron Adventure organizers are eager to try something a little different. "When you stop to think about it, we're all brothers and sisters," says Iron Adventure Team Leader Bill Borger. "And when we're out on the road, we're there to help each other, wave to each other, and a lot of times when we meet people at these rallies – any rally – we make lifetime friends."

But lest you think we all sat around a campfire singing *Kumbaya*, I'm here to tell you there's way too much riding for that.

### COWS, CURVES, & COVERED BRIDGES

The Iron Adventure Run features all the things you'd expect from a H.O.G. event: scavenger hunt, bike shows, biker games, food, music, and a bike parade – and of course the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

At event registration, I talk with Paul Bacon, a member of the Ellington,

Connecticut H.O.G. chapter, and H.O.G. member Huang Lon, who's traveled to the U.S. all the way from Taiwan. "About 10 minutes ago, we were standing over there in the corner," Paul explains, beginning to choke up. "And I couldn't help but see he's from a foreign country. And I had to go over and give him a hug. And that's exactly what I did. He gave me a pin, and then I broke. He gave me a patch, and I broke."

Lon owns a Sportster® and a Fat Bob® back home in Taiwan, and traveled to the U.S. for the 110<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary celebration in Milwaukee, making a small detour to take in the Iron Adventure Run first. "He be very touching," Lon says, struggling to describe their meeting in a language unfamiliar to him. "I have this kind of experience, too. I very touching, too," he says, placing his hand over his heart for emphasis, a universal symbol in any language.

Later that day at a bike show, I meet Robert Vrchon and Elena Rosini, who've traveled here from Milan, Italy. Back home, he rides a CVO™ Ultra Classic

Electra Glide®, and she rides a Sportster Seventy-Two® Elena's eyes begin to tear up as Robert explains what Harley-Davidson means to them. "She likes to say that we didn't just buy a piece of metal, a bike, but we bought a family, a worldwide family," Robert says.

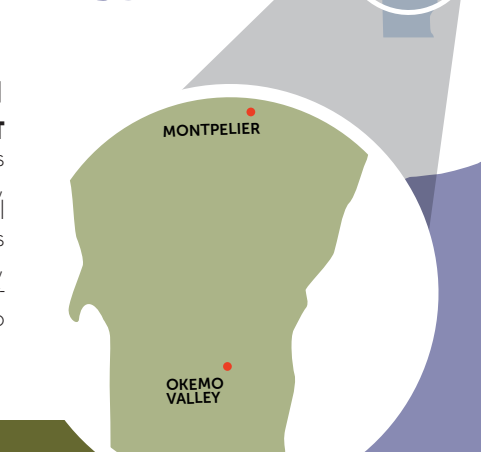
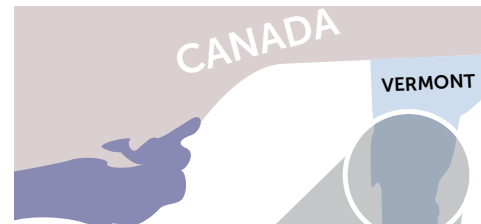
### FRONT AND CENTER AT THE IRON

The Iron Adventure Run is the opportunity to ride and experience Vermont in all its Green Mountain glory. Among the touring options, both guided and self-guided: a 110-mile ride on Route 30 to celebrate the Motor Company's 110th and H.O.G.'s 30<sup>TH</sup> anniversaries (or a 30-mile ride on route 110, for those so inclined); a covered bridge tour; and group rides to several well-known Vermont businesses: Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream factory, the Vermont Teddy Bear Company, and the King Arthur Flour Bakery, among others.

Basking in the state's natural beauty, it's difficult to imagine that just two

years ago Vermont – along with much of the nation's Eastern Seaboard – suffered catastrophic losses from a hurricane. "We were devastated by Hurricane Irene," Vermont Lt. Governor Phil Scott tells me. A longtime rider, he and his wife rode to the rally on his '98 Fat Boy. "We've pulled up our bootstraps to recover, and many people are still feeling the effects of that. But this region, and the Chamber of Commerce, opened up their arms, told the rest of the world that we're open for business, and two years later, we're having events like this, which is really meaningful."

On day one, I ride off on my own to see a couple of the state's iconic wooden »



## VERT MONT

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bridges. “We have over a hundred covered bridges here in Vermont,” according to Megan Smith, Vermont’s tourism commissioner, who spoke at the opening ceremonies. “The most covered bridges of any state. It’s sort of what we’re known for, but a lot of people have yet to discover it.”

Leaving rally headquarters at the Jackson Gore Inn, I roll east on my Road Glide towards Downers Bridge, also known as the Upper Falls Bridge. Originally constructed in the mid 1800s, the one-lane, 120-foot-long structure crosses the Black River, and is located on a dirt road just off State Road 131. Idling through, I try to imagine the clip-clop of horses’ hooves that must have echoed here more than 160 years ago, in marked contrast to the deep reverberation of my modern-day Harley-Davidson® V-twin.

From Downers Bridge, I ride northeast to the town of Windsor. Cornish, New Hampshire sits just across the Connecticut River, and the Cornish-Windsor Bridge, built in 1866, connects

the two towns. At 450 feet long, it’s the longest wooden covered bridge in the U.S., and the longest two-span covered bridge in the world, making it a must-see on anyone’s Vermont agenda.

Next morning, I join a group ride to Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream plant, a Vermont icon of the delicious kind. Red barns, fields of dairy cattle, and signs advertising maple syrup for sale dot the route to Waterbury, a distance of about 100 miles. “Moose Crossing” signs remind us to keep an eye out for errant animals. At B & J, team members from Green Mountain H-D have set up a special tent in the parking lot so rally-goers can enjoy a pre-tour ice cream sample. After the tour – no photos allowed on the production floor, by the way (our tour guide jokes, “I can’t tell if any of you might be spies for Häagen-Dazs!”) – you can sample the flavor of the day, which on this day happens to be “Coffee, Coffee, Buzz Buzz Buzz!” (no doubt guaranteeing a lot of very alert bikers on the ride back).

## IT AIN’T OVER TILL IT’S OVER

Much too soon, it seems, Saturday night closing ceremonies are upon us – thanking attendees, recognizing volunteers, and awarding prizes – among them recognition for the rally’s oldest and youngest riders (82 and 17, if you’re wondering). For the grande finale, Lt. Governor Scott, riding his Fat Boy, leads a bike parade to the American Legion Hall in the nearby town of Chester. Accompanied by a police escort, over a hundred motorcycles rumble in formation through the hills of rural south-central Vermont. Locals line the route, cheering and waving flags, the riders waving and honking horns in response. The atmosphere is electric, a true adrenaline rush; I bet I had a silly grin plastered on my face the entire way. Thirty minutes later, we arrive at the American Legion for the last blowout, featuring food, music, and fireworks.

After the smoke clears from the final burst of fireworks and we’ve ridden

back to our respective hotels to prepare for the return home, I recall something Val Ledterman, said to me: “This is about fueling the sport of motorcycling. Particularly, fueling people’s hearts with Harley-Davidson, tattooing H.O.G. on them, and making sure they understand what this whole lifestyle is about.”

I’d say mission accomplished, Val. **HOG**

Next year’s Iron Adventure Run has been set for July 24-26. Riders will meet at the Jackson Gore Inn of the Okemo Mountain Resort to kick off the trip.

For Glen Abbott’s video and additional photographs from the Iron Adventure Run, download the tablet edition of HOG 023.



## VERMONT By the Numbers

**300,000,000**

GALLONS OF MILK PRODUCED ANNUALLY BY VERMONT DAIRY FARMS

**1,300,000**

GALLONS OF MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCED ANNUALLY IN THE STATE

**626,000**

VERMONT’S HUMAN POPULATION

**135,000**

VERMONT’S COW POPULATION

**223**

MOUNTAINS IN VERMONT

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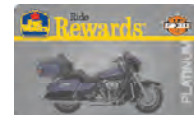
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