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Motorcycle Road Maps Take Riders on Roads Less Traveled

Almost 121,200 motorcycles were registered in North Carolina in 2008 according to the Federal Highway Administration. The number has increased 27.2% from just five years ago. Ask Vass resident **Dennis Munden** about the increase and he will tell you that while some people have turned to motorcycle transportation as a way to save fuel, it is also because more people are discovering the thrill of riding: the open road, the immense feeling of freedom, and the unrestrained opportunity to explore the surroundings without being impeded by a windshield. “Motorcycles do use less fuel and bikers tend to have a greater appreciation of the natural surroundings as they ride”, he said.

Munden, owner of a Honda 1800 VTX and an avid biker since the 1970s, went on an enlightening journey alone last year taking a 46-day road trip covering 9,200 miles through 17 states. During his trip, he discovered that while there are a wide variety of maps and other travel resources for motorcyclists, none of them covered an entire state nor adequately highlighted areas of typical interest to bikers, like the locations of “Mom and Pop” eateries, repair shops, lodging and some of the smaller, less publicized biking events.

“I figured I probably wasn’t the only biker frustrated by the limited information on the current maps,” he said. With the idea of designing a better map, Munden surveyed 3,500 motorcyclists in North Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama. Ninety percent (90%) said they preferred using paper maps so they could plan their travel routes ahead of time. Only 5% said they prefer GPS, and the other 5% said they typically traveled without a map or itinerary. “These results didn’t really surprise me,” said Munden, “because part of the appeal of a motorcycle trip is pulling out a map and plotting your course, then going off the beaten path and stopping at places along the way where you know there is a friendly smile.”

As a result of the survey and his own experiences, Munden created **Motorcycle-Maps.us**, a company that creates detailed paper maps tailored to the biker that show scenic routes through an entire state. Whenever possible, the routes go through state and national parks, and to landmarks and historic markers, which not only help educate riders about the state they are traveling in, but also sparks their interest to explore other parts of the state. All routes are identified based on riding experience because some routes are more suitable for the experienced rider who can better negotiate varying terrain and road surfaces.

In addition, the maps identify biker-friendly services along the way: small, local restaurants, camping/lodging, dealers, repair shops and retail stores; and biking events and activities taking place throughout the year. “These types of small businesses are the backbone of our economy”, Munden said. “The maps promote these establishments and direct bikers to them, which helps to keep revenue and tax dollars in-state.”

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Florida and Alabama maps are currently available for purchase and the North Carolina map is ready for print. Munden plans to map Georgia next, and South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Mississippi are planned for the near future. Each map is only \$8 and can be purchased at www.Motorcycle-Maps.us.

While Munden has identified some of the routes on the maps himself, he says he is also expecting input from other bikers. "My hope is that riders will pick up one of my maps and as they discover other unique eating establishments, local clubs and even new routes, they'll let me know so I can add those items to next year's maps," he said. "I want people to share their discoveries of those great but lesser-known gems out there that will enhance people's riding experiences."

However, Munden is quick to emphasize that they are not strictly for motorcyclists. "The maps can benefit any motorist looking for a scenic drive on the roads less traveled," he said.

In addition to being a valuable travel resource, the maps also have a philanthropic purpose. For each map sold, Motorcycle-Maps.us contributes 10% of the proceeds to in-state charities and churches. "It's important to help fellow bikers and their families, but I also hope to counter the stereotypical image some people have about bikers," he said. "Yes, we do wear leather and some of us have tattoos, but riders are regular people who come from all walks of life- attorneys, mothers, retirees. We just all happen to share a common passion for riding."

Motorcycle-Maps.us supports Riding with Angels, an organization dedicated to financially assisting families with funeral expenses when the loss of the family member is the direct result of a motorcycle accident. It also supports the Wounded Warriors program through American Angels, an all-female riding club that raises funds to assist injured soldiers at home and abroad. Munden himself is a disabled veteran, retiring from the Army after 22 years of service.

"This is a great start-up venture that has found a unique niche," said Ray Ogden, Executive Director of Partners in Progress, the economic development organization for Moore County. "Motorcycle-Maps.us has a great potential to grow as more bikers learn about this resource. It's important that we support entrepreneurial companies like this because they are significant job creators, and you never know when a company will grow to become a major employer in the community."

In the foreseeable future, Munden said he plans to participate in a ride to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. over the Memorial Day weekend. "To honor all veterans," he said.

For more information or to purchase a map, call 877-842-5535, email dmunden@motorcycle-maps.us, or visit www.motorcycle-maps.us.