

AVA's Rocky Mountain Rendezvous

By Guest Contributor Tue, Dec 15, 2015

The spectacular Rocky Mountain National Park area was the setting for the American Voyager Association's 26th Annual Rally, drawing more than 125 riders to Estes Park, Colo.

Contributed by AVA Chairman Michael McGee

The American Voyager Association gathered in beautiful Estes Park, Colo., last summer for its 26th Annual AVA Rally drawing more than 125 registered members and guests to the spectacular Rocky Mountain National Park area.



AVA members arrive at the Estes Park Hydroplant Park for BBQ. (Photo: Michael McGee)

The newly renovated Rocky Mountain Park Inn served as base camp for the rally where registration, seminars, group dinners and other festivities were held. Seminars included motorcycle safety, an annual women's seminar, and a special guest presentation on high performance suspension parts by Matthew Wiley of Race Tech. The women's seminar was led by Robin McGee, AVA Treasurer and Kawasaki Corporate Events staff member. Robin's seminar is always largely attended by both women passengers and riders (and even some men).

On Monday, prior to the official rally start, the AVA Board of Directors hosted our optional pre-rally event, a catered BBQ at the Town of Estes Park, Fall River Hydro plant Park. The hydro plant, built in 1909 by F.O. Stanley, inventor of the Stanley Steamer automobile, was constructed to provide electricity to the town of Estes Park and the Historic Stanley Hotel.

Big Horn Restaurant catered our evening meal in a wooded riverfront setting with the Fall River rushing gently just 50-feet from the covered dining pavilion. The food was excellent, the setting was quiet and cool, and the scenery was both breathtaking and relaxing.

Several unguided rides were made available to attendees that included Trail Ridge Road and the ride to Grand Lake, the Peak to Peak ride, and the Big

Thompson Canyon Loop through Loveland, among others. The Big Thompson Canyon leading to Loveland and portions of US 36 leading to Longmont were destroyed or heavily damaged by severe flooding in 2013. The roadways have since been rebuilt by the Colorado Department of Transportation and the pavement was mirror smooth which made the riding in those areas absolutely wonderful.



The courtyard of the Rocky Mountain Inn where bike judging and bike games were held. (Photo: Michael McGee)

We opened rally registration on Tuesday morning and group rides began. Estes Park is the official gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park, and members had an opportunity to ride Trail Ridge Road, the highest continuous paved road in the United States, reaching 12,183 feet in the alpine tundra. The vistas are absolutely breathtaking.

Our welcome dinner kicked off Tuesday evening, followed by a Motorcycle Chrome and Custom Show in the enclosed courtyard of the hotel. This is always a wonderful gathering of owners proudly displaying their cleaned and polished motorcycles for the other rally attendees and spectators to admire and judge. There were several different categories, such as Stock Touring, Custom Chrome Class, Cruiser Class, and Bike/Trike and Trailer combinations (big rigs). After judging we waited for sunset then moved to the front of the hotel for our custom motorcycle light show. Those who participate are a rare breed and each year there are "just a few more" lights added to their bikes making them brighter, bolder, and even more colorful. A first this year, was a guided ride dubbed "The Chairman's Ride," which led a group of roughly 30 motorcycles and 45 riders to Rocky Mountain Kawasaki in Longmont, Colo., via US 36 and SR 66, for refreshments and a tour of the dealership. Marshall Cook, General Manager of Rocky Mountain Kawasaki, hosted our group and provided special discounts on parts, accessories, and service for AVA rally attendees. For our return trip to the

hotel we chose US 287, then veered north through Loveland and the Big Thompson Canyon.

The next day we held our annual bike games in the rear courtyard of the hotel, with a focus on motorcycle safety and maneuverability, where one- and two-up riders could test their slow-speed skills. The nice thing about this location was that everyone was able to sit on benches, or on the brick wall around the courtyard to watch. This activity always attracts a large crowd of participants and plenty of spectators. Things tend to get silly, and a little crazy and everyone has a great time.



A special thanks to Kawasaki for helping sponsor our rally. (Photo: Michael McGee)

On Thursday evening, the AVA Board hosted our closing dinner and awards banquet. Rally goers enjoyed a delicious catered meal provided by Rocky Mountain Inn's chef and his wonderful staff. Awards were presented following dinner for winners of the Bike Show and Bike Games, as well as youngest and oldest attendees, and the longest distance ridden to the rally. Merchandise giveaways were graciously provided by Kawasaki and ROK™. And a special tribute was made in remembrance of Board Members Dot Wirtz and Ronald Riggs, who served as Rally Coordinator and Webmaster, respectively. Both passed away this year.

As a final item at the banquet, the location of next year's rally was revealed. The location is always a carefully guarded secret until the end of our rally celebrations, despite members conspiring together and attempting to trick us into sharing the information sooner. Plans are already underway and the rally is scheduled June 20-23, 2016 in Hurley, Wisconsin. If you haven't attended one of our rallies, we invite you to join us. We pride ourselves on providing a "family atmosphere" and hope to see you next year. To learn more about the AVA, please visit www.amervoyassoc.org.