

# Road Racing... **ON TWO WHEELS!**

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## **T**wisty turns of a road course.

Engines screaming at 13000 rpm as they reach full throttle. Two tires gripping the pavement by only a patch of rubber the size of a credit card. Knees just barely skimming the pavement as racers lean into the turns, seeming to defy gravity. No traffic, no stop signs, and best of all... *no speed limits!*

Motorcycle road races are held through several different sanctioning bodies and across the continents, from local WERA and CCS races, to the national races of the AMA, to across the globe of World Superbike, and the ultimate road racing classes of the MotoGP. Class structure within these sanctioning bodies vary from Superstock and Superbike classes, which both are based on production-built sportbike motorcycles, from the leading high-performance motorcycle manufacturers, such as Suzuki, Yamaha, Honda, Kawasaki, Ducati, and Aprilia. However, Superstock classes limit modifications to the engine and chassis to stay near "stock," whereas Superbike allows many more enhancements to the race bike, all the way up to MotoGP motorcycles, which are proto-type race bikes, similar to what Formula One racecars are in car racing.

Road racing uses racetracks that are specifically designed to resemble a winding country road. There are no duplicate race tracks, so going to each individual racetrack is a unique experience for both the racer and the race fan. As straight tracks equate with drag racing, and oval tracks with NASCAR, think twisty, curvy kinks in the road when you think of road racing. Some turns are called hairpins, other are called horseshoes.

Depending on where the track is geographically, there may be terrain along with the turns in the road. Many road courses also include hills to climb... *or spiral down!* Laguna Seca Raceway's "corkscrew" turn in Monterey, CA, is known around the world for just for this reason! Motorcycle road races are held at tracks that vary in length and layout from the 2.38 miles road course

at Barber Motorsports Park in Leeds, AL, to the 4.5 miles long track at Miller Motorsports Park in Tooele, UT, to races at Daytona International Speedway, which use both the infield road course and the tri-oval banking!

What makes motorcycle road racing most intriguing is watching how the race bike and its rider interact with these turns of the road course.

Sometimes a race bike will "twitch" as the rear tire spins up from too



much horsepower and not enough traction as it breaks loose from the pavement for a split second, but then bites onto the pavement again. When this happens in a sudden left dog-leg turn, the skill of the rider comes into play to keep the bike from spitting the rider off the bike! Other times the race bikes look like they are just riding on a rail like cars of a roller coaster speeding along its track, so seemingly effortlessly, as they fly through a S-turn. To top it off, unlike most car races, motorcycle road races are held rain or shine. ... And when you combine rain-slick racing conditions with racing on two wheels, well, that's when things can get very interesting!

Road racing is exhilarating for both the racer and the race fan. It keeps both coming back for more! No wonder motorcycle road racing is gaining momentum and popularity worldwide. Check out the world of motorcycle road racing. If you have never been, you'll be delightfully surprised at what you've been missing out on!

**GMI**

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