

Talking Africa Bike Week 2015 with Paul de Jongh

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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With just days before South Africa's largest motorcycle event, Africa Bike Week 2015, brought to you by Harley-Davidson, we chatted to Paul de Jongh, country manager for Harley-Davidson Africa. [Africa Bike Week 2015](#) takes place for the seventh consecutive year in the coastal town of Margate, KwaZulu-Natal, from 23-26 April 2015.

■ **Harley Davidson is quite an elite brand. What would you say makes it such a unique brand?**

Paul de Jongh: I always feel that we are inarguably the most satisfying business in the world because we are in the business of fulfilling dreams of personal freedom.



Paul de Jongh, Country Manager at Harley-Davidson Africa

Beyond the unique styling and engineering of our motorcycles, there is this respect and recognition amongst riders even if we don't know each other. You can see this when two riders pass each other on the road, whether through a wave or a nod of the head. When you become part of the Harley-Davidson community you instantly become part of the largest group of friends in the world where friendship and camaraderie break through any social boundaries.

Our customisation options are endless and I always look forward to seeing how every bike evolves into a work of art and becomes a reflection of the owner's individuality. I believe our dealer network and their people are what makes the Harley experience so magical for customers and in South Africa we are blessed with dealers who can truly be called the kings of customisation.

■ **This in the seventh consecutive year for Africa Bike Week, what exactly contributed to the consistent success of this event? And why?**

de Jongh: I believe it's because of the many journeys to and from ABW that allows people to discover more of our beautiful diverse touring country. People also have the opportunity to ride together and share the freedom of the open road regardless of what motorcycle they ride, which builds new friendships.

At the event, people get the chance to meet and interact with new friends, experience the Harley-Davidson lifestyle and products through demo rides and the Jumpstart experience (for those who do not have a license), and admire the beauty of artistic self-expression that each Harley-Davidson owner brings to life through their bikes. It's a beautiful sight to see the best motorcycles in the world, Harley-Davidson, in such big numbers and enjoy conversations with our many customers and friends.

■ **What is different at ABW this year?**

de Jongh: This year we have invested more resources in the live music at the event which carries no entry fee. It starts with the beach party on Thursday night featuring DJ Angie Khumalo and DJ Fistaz. On Friday the free concerts continue with the exciting talents of Loki Rothman, the rock diva Dilana and bad boy Jack Parow rocking into the evening. On Saturday night Georgia, Taxi Violence and Just Jinjer will close the music event which starts at 2pm. We have recently launched the new Street 750 in South Africa and six of these motorcycles have been specifically customised for display at ABW 2015.

■ **How has Africa Bike Week driven local tourism in the KZN region and in SA?**

de Jongh: That's a question that I believe the South Coast Tourism will be better placed to answer. We do have many international visitors who participate in the ABW event.

A marketing analysis and economic impact study of the Africa Bike Week was done last year by North West University's Tourism Research in Economic Environs & Society (Trees). Commissioned by South Coast Tourism, it is the only research that has been done into Africa Bike Week.

Trees' findings show that the average age of a biker at Africa Bike Week was 44, with 42% of bikers falling between 35 and 49 years and 32% falling in the 50-64 age group. Last year only 15% who attended Bike Week were aged 25-34 years and a paltry 8% of bikers were younger than this. Statistics show that more than 51% of bikers are exposed to bikes at the age of 11-20 years while 29% have their first thrill at anywhere between in utero and 10-years-old. A quarter of them inherit the passion from their parents, 8% from siblings and 18% from family members, proving that a love of the machine runs in the blood.

Source: www.financialmail.co.za

■ ***We understand that you will be travelling down via your own Harley-Davidson motorcycle to Margate. Which main scenic routes from Johannesburg and Cape Town can you recommended for riders looking to travel via motorcycle to ABW?***

de Jongh: This year I will be riding from Pretoria through Dullstroom, Longtom pass, Sabi, Graskop, Hazyview, Whiteriver, through the Jeppes Reef border post into Swaziland, exiting the Golela border post back into Northern KZN and along the coast to Margate.

I live in Cape Town and if I were to ride all the way I would probably go in-land via route 62, stopping at Barrydale (visit Diesel and Cream for their famous milkshake), up to Oudtshoorn and then head back to the garden route from there all the way along the coast. There are so many beautiful rides along the way to discover that my intended route will most likely end up with many additions to share afterwards with fellow riders.

■ ***How old were you when you got your first motorcycle and was it a Harley?***

de Jongh: I was five when my dad took me on the back of his motorcycle and I rode my first bike when I was ten as I delivered newspapers in our neighbourhood at 5am in the mornings before school. It was sadly not a Harley at that stage but then I instantly fell in love with the freedom of the open road. My first Harley-Davidson was a Dyna Fat Bob (FXDF) and today I am very privileged to be riding in and around the beautiful Cape region on a Street Glide Special.

[Africa Bike Week 2015](#), brought to you by Harley-Davidson, takes place for the seventh consecutive year in the coastal town of Margate, KwaZulu-Natal, from 23-26 April 2015.

For more, go to www.africabikeweek.co.za and www.facebook.com/HarleyDavidsonAfrica.

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