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## Retro Tours: Everything is possible in America. Also motorbike rental from the 70s

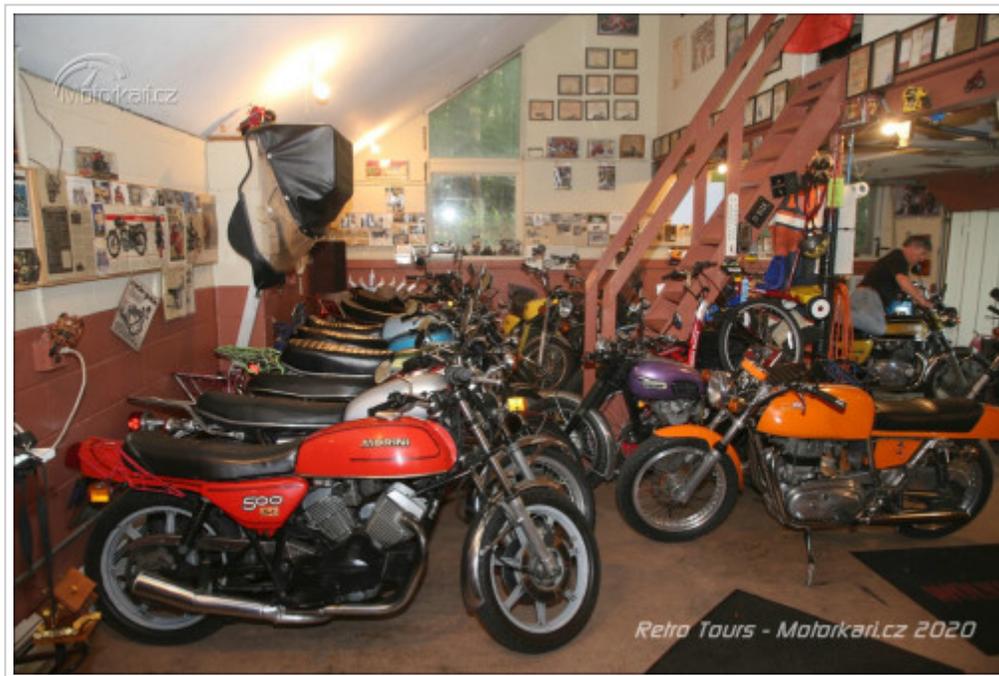
Text: [Alan Cathcart](#) | Translation: [Jan Ramesh](#) | Photo: [Kel Edge](#) | Posted: Yesterday | Viewed: 3 084x

When you say motorcycle rental, you automatically assume that they are new or just a few years old motorcycles. And when you say a private collection of classics, you automatically assume that it is a museum, the owner will sometimes drive a few kilometers during a veteran event. However, Joel Samick put the two together and on his 25 two-cylinder (okay, two are four-cylinder), more than 40-year-old motorcycles, he organizes trips around the USA and Canada for the public. *"Motorcycles are supposed to ride, not be stored,"* he says. Want to get to know America in style?

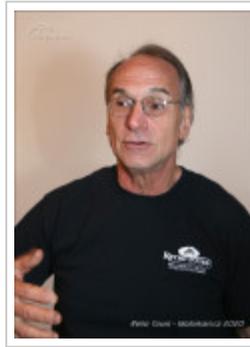


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I'm sure you know that too. You are facing a thing or a situation and you are thinking, *"How the hell is it possible that this has not occurred to more people before? It's so clear!"* And that was exactly my reaction when I first met Joel Samick, who runs his rental company or rather the Retro Tours travel agency in the northeastern USA . And I was saying the same thing now that I had visited Joel and his wife Lynn in their spacious house on the Pennsylvania-Delaware border, as this near-historic mansion was complemented by a huge garage and workshop with **23 two-cylinder and two four-cylinder motorcycles** . 1976 Honda Gold Wing and 1983 Suzuki GS550ES. All but the latter **date back to the 1970s** and they are also Joel's collection of Big Twins and Rental Tours. 1970 introduced the Bonneville 650 and Triumph T100C, a year younger is the Rickman Interceptor, 1973 represented the Norton Commando Fastback 750 and Yamaha TX750, 1975 the Suzuki T500 Titan (besides it there are two more two-strokes), from 1976 the Moto Guzzi 850 T3 , from the next year Harley-Davidson XLCR and so on to that GS550. This is a **materialized timeline** from which customers who come to Joel's Kennet Square (the capital of the world's mushrooming, by the way, accounts for half of the U.S.'s annual mushroom production) can choose the machine or machines to go on epic trips. lasting one to four days. I don't know of any similar company in the world that would offer this.



*"It's important to mention that my bikes aren't perfectly restored collectibles with a small mileage,"* Joel keeps reminding me, who is already in his seventies. *"They are functional motorcycles, carefully maintained, but they are **not the stars of exhibition halls** . I don't want to modernize them too much and I definitely don't fix them so that they are better than they really were. OK, I'll give better mufflers, lights or a horn, or I'll add turn signals if they didn't have them, but that will put it out. I want **people to try them the way they were** . In a single day, they can experience the 70s first-hand in several versions, we organize mass rides and we build every 80-120 km to refuel, stretch and switch machines. "*



Samick, born in Boston, got into motorcycles gradually, two events were key. *"I was 16 when I was washing dishes at a restaurant during a summer job. One night at 11 a.m., my friend Steve came on a Lambretta 200 scooter and told me he was going to Montreal to visit a friend and if I didn't want to go too. When I **finished at midnight, we jumped on Lambrett and headed 300 miles north to Montreal** . I've never ridden a motorcycle this far, in fact I've only ridden it once as a co-driver. At three in the morning, Steve was so tired that he just showed me how to handle the clutch and throttle and let me drive. I called my mom from the Canadian border to be **back in a few weeks**, which she wasn't exactly twice as excited about, and I enjoyed a wonderful time on a scooter around Canada. That was probably my first Retro Tour,"* Joel recalls today. More important, however, was the second event at Schenectady College. *"I had two disciplines, electrical engineering and philosophy, but I soon realized that I didn't really want to be at this school, that I wanted to work on motorcycles. Someone **gave me a Honda CL450** and I was absolutely blown away, I was still mounting something on it and researching how it works. I knew I wanted to do this for the rest of my life. I left school and went to apply for a job at a local Honda store, but they didn't take me because I couldn't do anything. So I **took a broom and cleaned it for free** until they needed a few more hands, and they accepted me."* Since this Honda, Joel's life has been purely motorcycle, including the summer of 1969, which he spent in Europe. *"I was one of many Americans who bought a Norton Commando at Elite Motors in London to see Europe. One hundred days later, I had most of Europe and a piece of Asia behind me, and eventually took Norton home with me. As well as the knowledge that **motorcycles and travel are forever a part of my life** ."*



1973 Yamaha TX750

After returning to Boston, Joel worked for a local Honda dealer and began teaching his motorcycle maintenance in his spare time at the Boston Adult Education Center, where he met his future wife - he actually married his student. At that time, he also **threw himself into road races** with his own zeal. First on a Yamaha RD400, then on a Suzuki GS550, where he won club races. However, it drew him to the highest class of Formula 1, for which his boss finally bought him the Yoshimura Suzuki GS1000, at which he won the entire club championship in 1981 and **entered the AMA Superbike for 1982**. *"I drove all four eastern races, Daytona 200, Talladega, Pocono and Loudon. I did well, but this experience opened my eyes. I was almost 30, everything cost a terrible package and I did nothing but sleep, went to work, then worked on a racer and slept again. When Lynn got a job in the MSF / Motorcycle Safety Foundation, everything I coughed and we moved here in Pennsylvania."* After four years of work by the technical instructor for American Honda offer came, if she Joel wanted **his own dealership**, so Lynn founded Powersports East, a successful multi-brand showroom in nearby Bear, Delaware, which they still have today. *"But I told Lynn I could last five years. In the end, I did it 18, but the retail business isn't exactly a pleasant environment, so I became an ogre - I was stressed, angry and fat."*



*Rickman Enfield Interceptor dates from 1971*

Joel left the dealership in 1998 and turned his attention to a growing collection of motorcycles, consisting of **Big Twins from the 1970s**, which he enjoyed riding at the time. And driven by the belief that **motorcycles should be ridden , not stored somewhere** , he began to organize trips on them for his friends. *"I had about 18 motorcycles at home, which I had somehow accumulated over the years. Something remained in the service, I got something on eBay, something just went by. And it was terribly **difficult to keep them operational just because they didn't drive**. I was tired of the endless cleaning of the carburetors! I needed to get a way for their bikes to spin, so I invited friends from Boston who were bikers, and we did such four- to six-day trips, most often to West Virginia. Pure adventure, no planning. We set off, and when we were tired, we found a place to spend the night. But it got to a point where it was already financially unbearable to continue this. Rubbers, oil changes, engine overhauls... My friend Doug Snyder has a lot of logical thinking and helped me come up with a business plan. It's not for me to make big money, but at least I won't lose weight as fast as I enjoy and share the adventure, pleasure and camaraderie of these retro trips. I enjoy meeting like-minded people, **the real America in the districts** , he's my man. "*



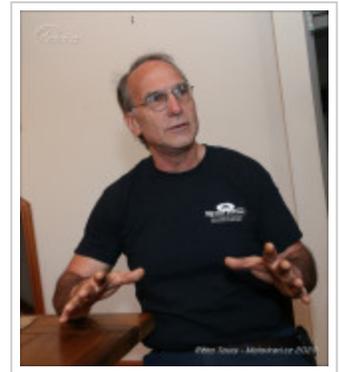
*The Benelli Tornado 650S was manufactured in 1972*

Retro Tours has officially existed since 2000, and even though it is a very specifically focused company, it is still full. One day it costs **90 USD** (approx. 2100 CZK) and at that price you have a motorbike rental, basic insurance, dinner and a prepared ride with Joel as the leader. He usually rides a BMW R 100 S from 1977, equipped with a Dutch sidecar EML, where he also drives a vercajk - after all, sometimes it is necessary to fine-tune something. Every year, it has six or seven fixed dates for **pre-planned trips**, which are usually attended by four to eight riders, and in the meantime it organizes many more **for specific people and groups according to their requirements**, and time and riding options. From one-day to ten-day, such as trips to Alabama for the October Barber Vintage Festival. Itineraries can be composed on various topics, gastronomic, cultural, scenic, but always in a similar spirit. *"We choose exclusively little-used roads, very twisted and drawn on the map with the thinnest pencil. Those that keep us in touch with the nature we pass through. Sometimes we ride on meadows, stop at museums, lookout towers and sometimes at kitsch tourist places. When the weather is good, we buy food somewhere in the village and have a picnic in the meadow. If we have to drive 100 miles according to the map, we usually drive 175,"* laughs Joel.



He is a joker at all, as evidenced by a look into the conditions of participation. There are 31 points, each must be signed by the participant, and the third one suggests what this is all about: *"I know that riding a motorcycle is a dangerous activity, and I also realize that the road I am about to set is **on the verge of madness** . ' Point 13: ' These are very old motorcycles and I understand that a major or minor mechanical or other defect can at any time cause a sudden locking of the front or rear wheel, which in Accident , injury or death. "*

Paragraph 17: *" A mechanic working on these motorcycles is neither perfect nor infallible. Mistakes are no exception, the **wheel may fall** . "* Or point 23: *" Thirty-year-old tanks sometimes flow and high-voltage wires sometimes make an arc. There is a **fire hazard and no fire extinguisher on board** . "* Everything is closed by point 31, where it is written in capital letters: *" Each point of this letter describes the potential danger to which I am voluntarily exposed after I have been strongly warned. "* This, too, makes Retro Tours a completely unique product that has been in operation for two decades and is led by a man who is far from the ogre from the end of the millennium. An enthusiast and a fun companion, as I saw for myself after our joint 240-kilometer trip in the saddle of his classic machines. If you want to **experience America differently** , try it with him.



*The Kawasaki W3 is also from 1972*



**List of Retro Tours motorcycles as of the date of publication:**

- 1970 Triumph T100C
- 1970 Triumph Bonneville 650
- 1971 Rickman Royal Enfield Interceptor 750
- 1971 BSA A65 Lightning 650
- 1972 Laverda 750SF
- 1973 Norton Commando Fastback 750
- 1973 Yamaha TX750
- 1974 Benelli Tornado 650S
- 1974 Kawasaki 650 W-3
- 1974 BMW R90 / 6 (Black)
- 1975 Suzuki T500 Titan
- 1975 Ducati 860 GT
- 1976 Honda CB500T
- 1976 Honda GL1000
- 1976 Moto Guzzi 850T3
- 1976 Kawasaki KZ750B1
- 1976 Yamaha RD400C
- 1977 BMW R100 / S + EML sidecar
- 1977 Yamaha XS650D
- 1977 Harley Davidson XLCR
- 1977 Yamaha XS750
- 1978 Honda CX500
- 1979 Moto Morini 500 Strada
- 1979 Moto Guzzi V50
- 1983 Suzuki GS550ES

## Editor information

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**Retro Tours**

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