

Wing Ding

(<https://www.wing-ding.org/>)

The sun is staying up longer each day. We haven't had much snow and it hasn't been getting that cold. It's time to start thinking about going to [Wing Ding 42](#) this year in Springfield, Missouri! We should all have our vaccinations by the end of June so this would make a great summer vacation trip.

Back in 1988: A guy I knew at work invited me, along with some of his friends, to ride to a motorcycle rally near Aspen, Colorado in July. We ended up with 7 people on 5 bikes and one trailer. This trip was my introduction to GWRRA'S **Wing Ding** (called Wing Ding X – since it was the 10th one). That year it was held in Snowmass Village, Colorado (near Aspen).

My family and I were living near Chicago, IL at the time. I was riding a 1981 GL1100 Gold Wing, with a couple of store bought leather saddle bags and a Vetter fairing which had a radio. This was going to be my first long distance adventure. Up until this point I think the furthest I had ridden on the bike on a trip was maybe 200 miles. I was a workaholic so I never had much time for anything. This was going to be a 10 day - 3,200 mile round trip and frankly, I didn't know if I could do it. But this exciting adventure would put me right in the middle of the Rockies with thousands of other motorcyclists! The more I thought about it the more I realized I had to go. I wasn't getting any younger!

When we arrived at the rally, I was blown away by seeing 5,000 Gold Wings in one place. Back then that was a big deal. Of course they were all decorated with different paint jobs, chrome, and lots of lights. There were stage shows, group dinners, games, drawings of prizes, lots of day trips, precision riding shows, poker runs, bike light shows, shopping, demonstration rides, all kinds of schools, certifications and of course, lots and lots of vendors, plus thousands of people from all over the US and some from other countries. Vendors were advertising their bikes, trailers, and even campers that you could haul with your bike.

These are all the same type of things you can experience at today's Wing Ding's.

I've been to over 10 Wing Dings and have always had a good time because there's so much to do and the people are just so friendly. But you do have to completely plan how you use your time/activities. Of course Wing Dings are a lot more fun if you have stuff you want to add to your bike! They have installers that will put stuff on your bike or you can add it yourself if you

bring a few tools. I've seen a lot of people installing stuff just outside their motel rooms getting a lot of help/advise from other motorcyclist's at the motel.

But nowadays a lot has changed because of the internet motorcycle stores and fast delivery times. Most add-ons are designed to be easy to install by yourself plus you usually don't have to splice into the cycle's wiring. I believe an exception may be having a complete profession light installation done at a show. This is popular because they come up with very creative ideas. The pin strippers are always there but their business ebbs and flows depending on people's taste. Back in the good-old-days a large rally was the best place to buy motorcycle accessories because the vendors would put them on the bikes for no extra cost (but no parts discount.). That's generally not true these days. The booth costs are so great many vendors can't even offer a discount. The installers at the show, who are not working for a vendor, charge their own prices.

Meeting People at Wing Ding: Travelling with a group of friends is an excellent way to have a good time at a rally. But you'll also want to meet new people by walking around the show and starting up a conversation. There are so many nice people there with so many interesting backgrounds, lives and travels. Example, maybe you've never been to Alaska and want to go. Just walk around find a group of people chatting, stand there and at some point ask them if anyone has ever been taken a trip there. I bet you won't have to do very many times before you'll find someone who can share their experience. One year I met a small group who were joking and having fun. I asked them where they came from. The more we chatted and laughed the more people gathered around. The group got to be about 10 people and we decided to head to dinner. We all had a great time.

Of course you'll want to buy a few raffle tickets to take a chance on winning a new Gold Wing, but you'll have to stay until 5:00 pm (Sat) for the closing ceremonies (winner must be present to win). But there are other opportunities to win prizes. One of the more popular ones is a daily 50-50 raffle. I friend of mine, who always seems to win something, won a 50-50 raffle worth \$2,400! I tried to do everything exactly the way he did when he bought his ticket, but I didn't have the winning number on my ticket. ☹️

Wing Ding Costs: You can calculate a rough estimate of your Wing Ding GWRRA costs by looking near the end of the Feb issue of Wing World magazine (Page 75). [You can also text WingDing to 555-888 for all the latest news, updates, and special offers.] If you were a life member and signed up for all 5 days, attended all the free stuff, slept outside next to your bike, didn't eat anything, and got free gas then Wing Ding would only cost \$20.00! 😊

Of course like any week long travel vacation, at Wing Ding you can spend as little or as much as you want. It just depends on you. I remember one Wing Ding trip back in 2013 that cost me

over \$27,000! Yup, I bought a Gold Wing there. I hadn't plan to but I ran into a slick talking kid sitting on a new 2013 bike... honest, I just asked a few questions: Like, what's the difference between the 2012 and 2013 model? I'm thinking features, performance, etc. He scratches his chin and says... "Oh... about \$1,300". So, of course, traded in my 2008 Wing and bought a new 2012! That's a true story. It was Schroader's Honda in North Carolina... his dad (Terry) was the owner, nice guy. He buys new Gold Wings buy the freight car load so he has great prices

Travel: It's about 800 miles one way to Springfield so you'll want to plan your travel time. For that kind of distance you'll probably want to take the expressway. Back roads are nice but slower and that may cause you to stop at more motels which will increase your travel cost. Gas is pretty cheap right now so: $[(1600 \text{ mi} / 32 \text{ mpg}) \times \$2.50]$ around \$125 for the whole trip.

But! You may want to stop and spend some time at the Gateway National Memorial in St. Louis. Take a tram ride up [The Gateway Arch](#) - 630 feet to the top of the Arch – Gateway to the West (The Louis and Clark expedition 1804-1806). They also have a good, detailed [Museum](#) at the base of the Arch which covers the 200 year period around the opening of the West.

The Wing Ding Hotel/Motels will probably be your most expensive cost (\$85-200/night). You have to book them through Wing Ding to get a hotel/motel nearer to the event. It's possible to find some cheaper motels outside of the "control zone" that conventions setup but those motels can be a long ride into the event on a daily basis. It just depends on the city, the time of year, etc. Some people just come for one night, usually the locals, but the vast majority of the people will want to stay at least 2-4 nights. Other than the Opening Ceremony, there is little happening at Wing Ding on the first day of the event, but if you do come early it's a good time to cruise around the city and settle in. A rough estimate might be $[\$140 \times 4 \text{ nights}]$ \$560 but remember to include the motel cost of 2 nights $[\$90 \times 2 = \$180]$ on the road (one night going and one night coming back home which assumes 400 miles a day riding. So, total Motels = \$740.

Another option to keep the cost down is to camp out or you may have an RV or a trailer/tent combination (all the sites are listed on Page 78 of the Feb. Wing World).

Food is food, spend whatever you want but it's a little more expensive on site at the convention. The best quality, most interesting food usually will be found in the local restaurants. But if you've planned a tight schedule of activities you're not going to have time to get your bike and cruise around without missing an event. The GWRRA and Vendor sponsored events/shows are a good deal but the food at these events can be hit or miss sometimes. I always try to attend at least one of these. Make sure you see the Precision Drill Team... excellent!

We have at least one member (Big Phil J.) who is interested in finding someone who might be interested in splitting the cost of a motel. Give me a call or text me (below) and I'll try to spread the word around to see who's interested in discussing this with other people. (Sharing a room has 2 big issues which need to be worked out ahead of time: snoring and late night TV watching!) ☺

The rally is only about a 45 mile ride south to **Branson, MO** where there is a [tremendous amount of entertainment](#). The Dolly Parton complex is every popular. You might even consider changing to a Branson motel after Wing Ding and stay a few more days there.

You can check all of that out at:

([web:https://www.explorebranson.com/attractions-museums-branson#!grid~~~Featured~1](https://www.explorebranson.com/attractions-museums-branson#!grid~~~Featured~1))

I'm going: I plan to lead a group down to Wing Ding, so let me know if you'd like to join us. (My wife doesn't ride so she'll probably drive or fly down there. She'd be glad to have you join her if you want to.) We'll generally ride about 400 miles a day (daylight riding). Remember this is a scheduled ride so we go rain or shine!

Especially make sure your tires are ready for this kind of trip.

Remember the GWRRR riding dress code: Helmet, Long Sleeve Jack, long pants, gloves, riding boots that cover your ankles! Remember sunglasses, sunscreen, and raincoats. Many hotels will have cleaning rags, water for the bikes... don't use their towels!

With all of the information above, you should be able to roughly see the total picture of having a great Wing Ding experience.

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