

# SPIRITS 2014 In



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Exhumed from the catacombs of American history once again, Indian Motorcycles lives. When the purchase of America's first Motorcycle Company was announced by Polaris (manufacturer of Victory Motorcycles) the faithful waited with baited breath as the rumors flew. Would Victory, like others, assemble together parts and pieces and build the "Vindian?" That proved not to be the case. Resurrected from the ground up, Indian is a completely separate division of Polaris and their engines do not share a single part with the existing Victory line. I am seated on a stunning 2014 Indian Chieftain and I too wonder. Polaris may have brought Indian back from the dead, but is its spirit alive?

The Chieftain is the first fairing-wearing, hard bagger ever to sport the Indian badge. A 1950's art deco train inspired the fairing, and the flowing

hard bags are trimmed in chrome. The Chieftain is "tribal leader" of the Indian line. The fairing is loaded with modern technology, complete with a digital display that reads everything from tire pressure to heated grip levels. Bluetooth is built right in, so you can link your cell phone or MP3 player to the bike wirelessly. A compartment in the batwing, complete with a USB connection and a padded pocket that will hold a smart phone, so you can ride, listen and charge all at once. Did I mention the 100 watt stereo system? The windshield on the fairing is electrically adjustable via a switch on the left hand control. It's the first electrically adjustable windshield on a factory fork-mounted fairing.

Performance-wise, what separates the Chieftain from the Chiefs (both Classic and Vintage) is its steering geometry and air-adjustable monoshock, which can completely change the ride feel.

This motorcycle is comfortable; damn comfortable. Rider triangulation is relaxed and roomy. I love the electric windscreen and it may have changed motorcycling forever - it could be one of those "once you have it, you won't be without it" kind of features... Around town it's completely out of the way when down, and the 4-inch travel makes freeway flying a breeze, a very light breeze. The difference is dramatic allowing the rider to easily hear the 100 watt stereo at full speed.

The Thunder Stroke 111 engine just devours the highway; a completely new design from the former Power Plus 100 and 105 that is just amazing, mounted in a cast aluminum frame. The torque is visceral, and I gotta admit it put a serious ass grin on my smug mug as I pass, well, everybody. Even at 80mph, a twist of the throttle easily puts me at triple digits. The primary drive features a large wet clutch with excellent feel and the six-speed transmission is solid yet smooth. The 49-degree V-Twin demands a balancer for smoothness, but there is ample mechanical personality communicated through the bars and floorboards. Designed from the outside in it's uniquely Indian and doesn't share a single proprietary part with any Polaris engine, or any engine ever built for that matter. It's truly a beautiful, modern interpretation of a classic Indian power plant, with a claimed peak torque of 119.2 foot-pounds at 3000 rpm.

Everywhere you stop with this bike a crowd is sure to gather. Esthetically, Polaris has captured the spirit of Indian and the abundant badging never lets you forget. I think I counted thirty Indian logos and emblems on everything from mirrors, to handle grips to saddlebags. This





# AWAKENED: Indian Chieftain Tour



is designed to be a "World" bike, so Indian has designed it to be compliant with import specifications world-wide. For example Australia's maximum handlebar width is just a tad narrower than in America, thus it's made to that dimension.

The seat height of 26 inches makes the Chieftain feel nimble even though the bike weighs in at 848 lbs wet; The Chieftain's steeper rake (25 degrees), shorter wheelbase (65.7 in.) and lower bar height make it nimble-feeling but decidedly tour-ready. Not only at low speeds but also during aggressive cornering, where it requires extremely low effort. The Chieftain's lean angle is also increased. All bikes come with ABS, cruise control, keyless start, a light bar (or riding lights for the Chieftain) and leather seats. The Chieftain gets the stereo, Bluetooth-push-to-talk hands-free calling and tire-pressure monitors, pretty impressive even at its starting price of \$22,999.00. (\$500 more for "Indian Motorcycle Red" as pictured and \$250 for California).

I have a minor criticism with 5.5 gallon gas tank. The display itself does not display miles remaining when in reserve and is hard to read in sunlight. (I was told there's a way to adjust the display but never figured that out). I ran







the gauge to empty after 165 miles then filled up the tank. It took exactly 4.8 gallons, implying a 0.7 gallon reserve left, that's normal. (Admittedly I was doing 80mph most of the time and engines burn more gas at higher speeds and it wasn't all freeway) With the wind in the right direction and slower speeds, 200 miles per tank may be possible. I only bring this up because the Chieftain is sooooo touring friendly. For the serious couple the Chieftain may need a tour pack. We all know that touring maybe more about the princess than the chief.

By the way, that gas cap on the left tank? It's just for decoration.

Ultimately this motorcycle gets 5 stars for style, comfort, power, technology and flat-out cool factor. I am even a big fan of the kickstand kill switch. If you put down the kickstand it kills the engine and you can't start in gear. You will never ride off with the kickstand down again.

Options like the Stage 1 Slip-On exhaust amplify its rich, throaty exhaust note allowing the Thunder Stroke 111 engine to breathe more freely unleashing additional power and crisp throttle response. While some consider the dual exhaust to be dead weight, Indian says they stopped counting when the bike went over 800 pounds, and that it gives a measurable performance boost. If you buy the Chieftain, spring for the optional heated grips and the Saddlebag Audio Kit. Using the color-matched Concert Audio Lids to replace the stock lids, the integrated audio system delivers powerful, premium-quality audio.

Riding home on Hwy 74 through the mountains of San Jacinto I can confirm that this bike handles amazingly well in twisty mountain roads with confident lean angles. The purr of the Thunder Stroke 111 allows deep contemplation. Some motorcycles disappear beneath you, they are transparent. The Chieftain reminds you you're alive, keeping you seeking ever more. I guarantee that Indian motorcycles will have very few naysayers. There are those that will add one to their collection, a piece of history, but most will ride this motorcycle to all the wondrous places America has to offer, inspiring us to see this land, its people and awaken our sleeping spirits.

**Postscript:** Champion Sidecars in Westminster, California is the very first to offer a stunning matching side car for the Chieftain... WOW!

