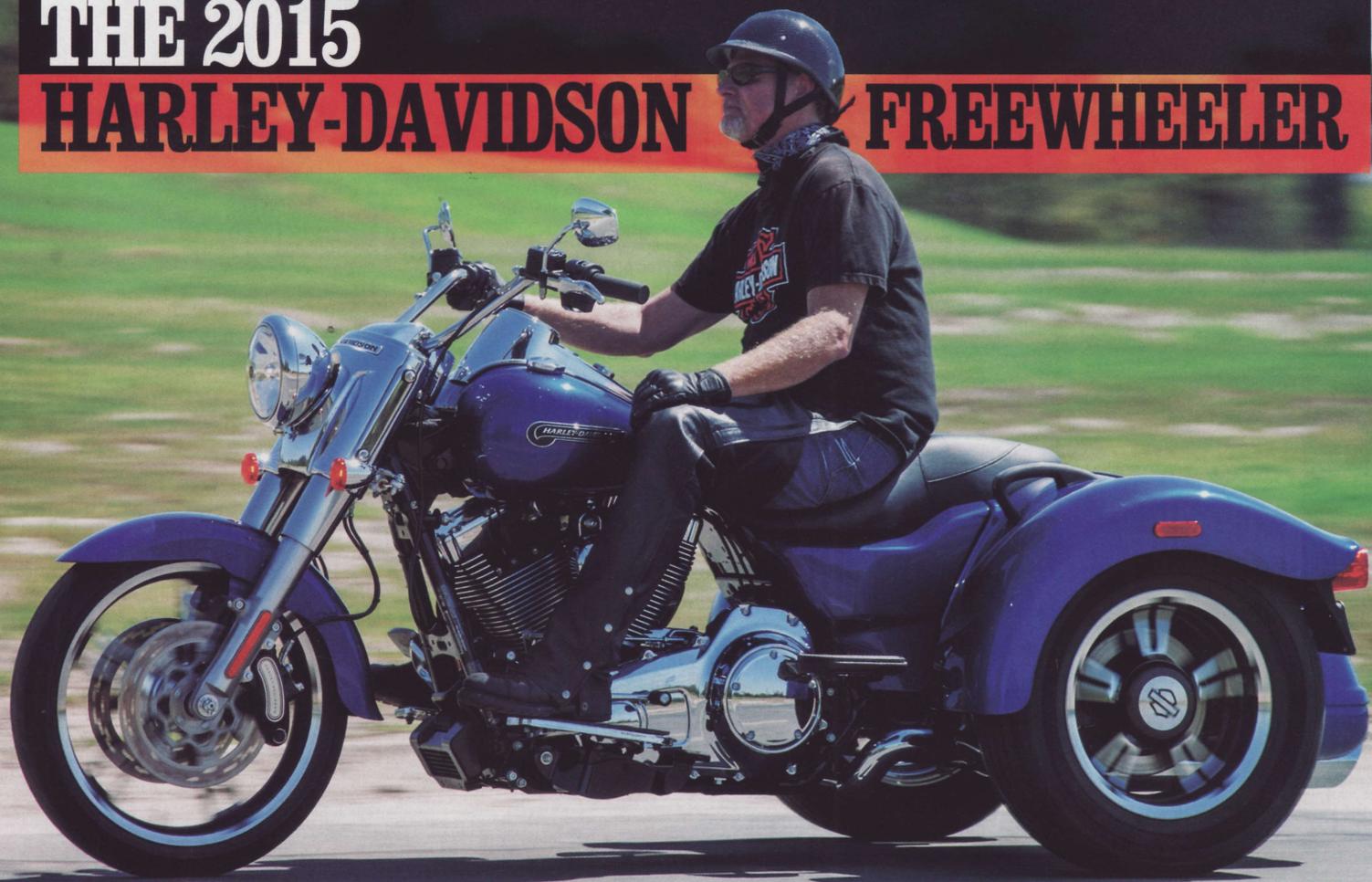


# THE 2015

# HARLEY-DAVIDSON

# FREEWHEELER



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**Photos:** Ron Sinoy, Mraz

Reading trike reviews by motojournalo brethren often irk me. They, as most, find the need to compare and contrast bikes and trikes, finally conceding that it's a totally different riding experience. No kidding! I'll read how trikes are for the "injured or the meek, for those unable or unwilling to maintain balance on two wheels". Let me set you straight here - Trikers generally put far more miles on their trikes than most two wheelers. Why do you think that is? Because they can. They ride at night, when the "meek" two wheelers have called it a day. Trikers ride in inclement weather; I'm talking snow, while two-wheelers are "unable to maintain their balance." Trikers spend more time in the saddle because they love to ride and the comfort and confidence of three wheels allows them to do so. And yes, disabled riders can keep their dreams alive.

I picked up the 2015 Harley Freewheeler at the H-D Fleet center and was sheepishly informed that I had to take a riding test before taking possession of the trike. Excellent, I thought to myself, finally, Harley is actually testing riders' competence prior to handing over the keys. My tasks? Do figure 8's around set of cones, stop the bike and then demonstrate the use of reverse. They didn't know I

was the Triking Viking he he.

To my point, this is not and does not act like a two-wheeler, so no need to contrast, compare or denigrate those who choose three wheels, and thank you Harley-Davidson for checking the competence level of us Moto Journalists.

The truth is trikes are fun, damn fun and I have personally ridden in snow, over ice, hill and dale on trikes. The 2015 Harley-Davidson Freewheeler is the epitome of triking fun; a lean, mean pared down three-wheeled hot rod married with the gutsy TC 103 that makes for a powerful and responsive trike. Traditional trikes are generally bells-and-whistled touring mammoths like Freewheeler's big brother, the Tri Glide Ultra Classic. The Freewheeler on the other hand is a well-mannered ride with a hot rod temperament. This trike is without a doubt THE most fun conventional trike that this Triking Viking has ridden to date - and I've ridden them all! Just hammer the throttle and that big rubber-mounted high Output Twin Cam 103 launches you like no other Harley, with nearly 105 horsepower. The twin contact patches of the rear Dunlop Signature P205/65R15 tires grab like a Corvette and this baby hauls ass.

With a claimed weight of 1,045 lbs the Freewheeler gets 4 discs for one machine: 6 pistons grab a pair of 300mm discs up front, and two more grab a

pair of 270mm fixed rotors in the rear. A linked braking system applies front and rear systems on the application of the foot lever while the front brake acts independently when the lever is applied on its own. The Freewheeler doesn't have any traction control or ABS brake, nor options for such. A 49mm telescopic front fork and a pair of air-adjustable rear shocks suspend the Freewheeler 4.9 inches above ground with an easy-to-manage 26-degree steering head and nearly 34-inches of rake. The foot activated parking brake is conveniently located on the left side behind the floorboard.

Like all Harley-Davidson trikes the rear suspension is the solid axle design. It feels quite taut at low speeds. Independent suspension is generally more forgiving but in this case, with a trike this light and responsive the solid axle performance accentuated the hot rod sensibilities with snappy cornering and NASCAR like lane changing ability. It's the lighter power to weight ratio seems befitting to a solid axle design.

When you're on the long haul, there's an electronic cruise control for a more relaxed ride. And a 6-gallon tank will take you a claimed 234 miles. Reverse is standard and easily activated so you don't have to hunt for accessible parking, a must on a trike. Powered by the starter motor, when the bike is idling in neutral simply press the R



toggle button on the left controls and an “R” lights up in the Speedo. Then press the R button again and you’re moving in reverse. It’s not designed to back you up a hill, just to get you out of parking spaces. The Freewheeler won’t start unless you’re in neutral, you can’t just grab the clutch and hit the starter.

The low profile trunk claims to fit two full face helmets. I was suspicious but with a little puzzling they do fit but not much else will. I like that the trunk lid opens right-to-left, clear of any passengers.

Stylistically, in my opinion, the H-D design team nailed it. The Fat Bob style front fender and pair of bobtail rear fenders give the Freewheeler a sleek custom look. An all-new headlight nacelle slims down the front end, while pair of dual chrome mufflers with slash-down tips peek out from beneath the trunk. It was easy to reduce the overall steering input after knocking off the weight of the

front fairing and shortening the overall length, but to balance it all together onto the cool mag wheels they repositioned the center of gravity and added a steering stabilizer to the front fork.

Freewheeler handlebars rise 12-inches above the clamp and are positioned closer to the rider for easier operation while maintaining an ape-hanger style. Ergonomically, the rider triangulation was a little tight for this 6, 1” rider but a plethora of aftermarket seats are available. The gunslinger styled passenger seat has integrated grab rails and a slip-in passenger backrest is available. Accessories include a model-specific detachable windscreen, quick-release sissy bar, and rear rack for long distance cruising.

In conclusion, if you and your significant other are planning to tour America for months on end, I suggest the larger, more spacious Harley-Davidson

Tri-Glide Ultra. But if owning a high octane hot rod and having the time of your life on a trike that screams full-on-fun, the Freewheeler’s got your name all over it.

The Freewheeler comes in three color options (Vivid Black, Amber Whiskey and Superior Blue) and the retail price starts at \$24,999 for the black, \$25,499 Premium Paint color options. Cruise control and reverse are standard.

- Rubber-mounted, Air-Cooled 1690cc High Output Twin Cam 103™ engine with integrated oil cooler; finished in Black with chrome covers
- 6-Speed Cruise Drive® transmission
- Electric reverse with handlebar mounted control and LED indicator light
- Hydraulic Assist & Slip clutch actuation
- Electronic Cruise Control
- Low-maintenance belt drive
- Seven-piece nacelle tucked in tight against the



frame and forks

- Low-profile trunk with full-width lid that opens right to left; 2 cubic-foot capacity and designed to carry two full size helmets
- One-piece, two-up reduced reach Comfort Stitch seat moves rider one inch forward
- Bobtail rear fenders with integrated lighting
- Stop/tail/turn LED rear lighting
- Specific console design with reverse indication light in speedometer face and black-faced gauges
- 12-inch mini-ape handlebar brings hand controls close to the rider and reduces required turning force
- Soft-grip passenger grab rails
- Dual Halogen headlamp
- Ergonomic hand controls with intuitive design and tactile feel
- Hydraulically linked braking system
- Foot-activated parking brake
- Air-adjustable rear shocks
- Streamlined, low-profile front fender
- Enforcer Cast Aluminum wheels; 19-inch diameter front wheel
- Chrome dual exhaust with slash-down mufflers
- Full-length rider footboards with heel/toe shift levers