



**KAWASAKI**  
**MOTORCYCLE**  
**HISTORY 1952-2002**

## Kawasaki Legends

Forty years have passed since Kawasaki started full-scale production of motorcycles.

Our first motorcycle engine was designed based on technical know-how garnered from the development and production of aircraft engines.

Our entry into the motorcycle industry was driven by Kawasaki's constant effort to develop new technologies.

Over the years we have released numerous new models that have helped shape the market, and in the process created many enduring legends based on the speed and power of our machines.

In 1996, we produced our 10 millionth vehicle, a testament to Kawasaki's ability to meet the needs of a wide range of riders.

As Kawasaki continues to "Let the good times roll," our latest challenges will surely give birth to new legends...





**1969**  
**H1** | KH500-A  
2-stroke  
Air-cooled In-Line Triple  
Piston valves  
498 cm<sup>3</sup>



**1972**  
**Z1** | KZ900-A  
4-stroke  
Air-cooled In-Line Four  
DOHC, 16 valves  
903 cm<sup>3</sup>



**1983**  
**GPz900R** | ZX900-A  
4-stroke  
Liquid-cooled In-Line Four  
DOHC, 16 valves  
908 cm<sup>3</sup>



**1990**  
**ZZ-R 1100** | ZX1100-C  
4-stroke  
Liquid-cooled In-Line Four  
DOHC, 16 valves  
1,052 cm<sup>3</sup>



**2000**  
**Ninja ZX-12R** | ZX1200-A  
4-stroke  
Liquid-cooled In-Line Four  
DOHC, 16 valves  
1,199 cm<sup>3</sup>

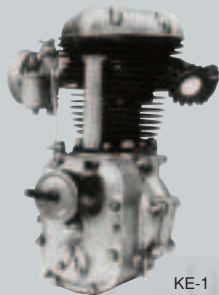


**2002**  
**ZZ-R 1200** | ZX1200-C  
4-stroke  
Liquid-cooled In-Line Four  
DOHC, 16 valves  
1,164 cm<sup>3</sup>

# KAWASAKI MOTORCYCLE HISTORY 1952-2002

## 1950

### 1952



KE-1

Design of the KE-1 Motorcycle Engine is completed. (Kawasaki Machine Industry (the precursor to Kawasaki Aircraft Company), Takatsuki Factory)  
"Aircraft engineers" began development of the KE (Kawasaki Engine) in 1949. Mass production starts in 1953. The air-cooled, 148 cm<sup>3</sup>, OHV, 4-stroke Single has a maximum power of 4 PS at 4,000 rpm.

### 1955



KB-5

Meihatsu 125-500



Production of the KB-5 Motorcycle Engine starts. (Kawasaki Aircraft Company, Kobe Plant)

Its responsive torque at low and mid rpm, and outstanding characteristics give it a good reputation among riders. For the next 10 years the KB-5, while receiving a number of updates, provides the base for Kawasaki's 125 cm<sup>3</sup> motorcycle engine.

The Meihatsu 125-500, equipped with the KB-5, is released. 1956 sees the debut of the Meihatsu 125 Deluxe.

In 1957, production of an improved version of the KB-5 engine, the KB-5A, commences. The "Kawasaki" logo is stamped into the side cover for the first time.

Meihatsu 125 Deluxe



#### "A Durable Kawasaki Engine"

The Meihatsu 125 Deluxe (Kawasaki Meihatsu Industries) achieves a top speed of 81.5 km/h at a motorcycle industry magazine test, setting a record for its category. In a separate test, the Kawasaki engine proves its phenomenal durability by running for 50,000 km without breaking down.

## 1960

### 1960

Kawasaki 125 New Ace



A factory dedicated exclusively to motorcycle production is completed. Sales of the Kawasaki 125 New Ace commence.

### 1961

Kawasaki Pet



Sales of the first Kawasaki brand motorcycles, the Kawasaki Pet and Kawasaki 125B7, commence. Using the most advanced materials of the time, their curved surface compositions give them high-sense designs.

### 1962

Kawasaki 125B8



Sales of the Kawasaki 125B8 commence. Developed and manufactured exclusively by Kawasaki Aircraft Company, the B8's low-end torque, quiet engine and supreme durability earn it the reputation as the No. 1 practical use bike.

### 1963

The B8M Motocrosser takes the top 6 positions in the Hyogo Prefecture Motocross Tournament.

#### The Fearsome "Red-Tank Furore"

With all the Kawasaki bikes completing the race, they prove that "Kawasakis are strong machines on tough circuits". Later, at the Fukui Prefecture Motocross Tournament, Kawasaki machines win all the race events; at various motocross tournaments held in West Japan, Kawasaki machines are victorious in most of the events – despite not competing the past year. The outstanding achievements of the "Red-Tank Furore", named for its red fuel tank, earn it a fearsome reputation.

B8M



### 1966



W1

Popularity of the W1 (650 cm<sup>3</sup>) (650W1 in Japan) in the US gains Kawasaki world-wide recognition as a big bike manufacturer.

Sales of the A1 (250 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The first bike in its class to be equipped with an air-cooled, 2-stroke, parallel twin, rotary disc valve engine, the A1 demonstrates phenomenal performance.

#### Noteworthy GP Racing Achievements

In the final race of the 1966 FIM World Championship, Kawasaki's first 125cc GP racer, the KAC Special, finishes in 7th and 8th. In the All-Japan Championship, the A1R (250 cm<sup>3</sup>) finishes 2nd. In the 1967 Singapore GP, the A7R (350 cm<sup>3</sup>) takes 1st and 2nd; the A1R finishes 2nd and 3rd. In the Japan Round of the 1967 FIM World Championship, the KA-2, a liquid-cooled, 124 cm<sup>3</sup> V4 equipped with the world's first all rear exhaust mechanism, takes 3rd and 4th showing Kawasaki's technological prowess.

A1R



### 1969

H1



Sales of the H1 (500 cm<sup>3</sup>) (500SS Mach-III in Japan) commence. The air-cooled 2-stroke Triple, is the fastest machine in its class with a top speed of 200 km/h. Nicknamed "Bronco", the H1 marks the beginning of Kawasaki's Speed King Legend.

#### Expectant World Champion Shines

In the 125cc class FIM World Road Racing Championship, Dave Simmons, with victories in the West German GP and the Isle of Mann TT, wins the series championship on a KR-1.



# 1970

**1972** Overseas sales of the Z1 (900 cm<sup>3</sup>) start. Sales of a domestic version, the Z2 (750 cm<sup>3</sup>), start the following year.



### Birth of the Power King Legend

The Z1, with the world's first air-cooled, DOHC, In-Line Four and other impressive specs, becomes the world's most powerful motorcycle. Code-named "New York Steak" during its five-year development, the mouth-watering motorcycle is a huge hit from the moment of its release. The domestic Z2 also enjoys tremendous popularity in Japan. Overseas the Z1 reigns as the "King of Motorcycles" for a number of years. Z1-mania still endures in present day. In Japan, the popularity of the Z2 among motorcycle magazine readers catapults it to No. 1; the "Myth of Z" is born.

**1977**



Sales of the Z1-R (1000 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. A real-style cafe racer, the Z1-R's stylish appearance receives great praise overseas.

**1978**



Sales of the Z1300 commence. At 1300 cm<sup>3</sup>, the liquid-cooled, 4-stroke, DOHC In-Line 6-cylinder "Dreadnaught" is the largest Japanese manufactured machine. Its release at the Cologne Motor Show marks the beginning of the Kawasaki Monster Legend.

**1979**



Sales of the Z400FX commence. The first air-cooled, 4-stroke, DOHC In-Line-Four in its class, the "FX" makes a name for itself. Its large frame (from a machine one class higher), compact engine and no-compromise quality make it a big hit.

The same year, the Z750FX and the Z250FT are released and enjoy a favourable reception.



The first Japanese mass-produced belt-driven motorcycle, the KZ440LTD, is manufactured for the US market. This is one example of Kawasaki's "Spirit of Embracing Challenge".

The same technology is used in two domestic models, the Z250LTD, and the Z400LTD starting in 1983.

# 1980

**1980** Overseas sales of the Z1100GP commence. The first model in the supersport GP line-up is the first Kawasaki to feature DFI (Direct Fuel Injection) and an oil cooler.

**1981**



Kawasaki wins the manufacturer's title in the 250cc class FIM World Road Racing Championship for the fourth year in a row. The machine is the KR250. A. Mang wins the rider's title in both the 250cc and 350cc classes. Sales of the AR50 commence. Kawasaki's first 50 cm<sup>3</sup> sports model is also the first 6-speed machine in its class.

**1982**



Sales of the Z400GP, a domestic model in the GP line-up, commence. Overseas sales of the Z1000R commence. The legendary model is a limited edition replica commemorating Eddie Lawson's 1981 AMA Superbike Championship victory. Based on the Z1000J, the "Lawson Replica" features the latest technology, like an oil cooler, and lime green colouring.

Overseas sales of the GPz1100 commence. The new sports model features DFI and Uni-Trak suspension. The following year, sales of other models in the series, the GPz750 and the GPz400 commence.

**1983**

The Z750 Turbo is released. Often referred to as "the pinnacle of air-cooled machines" at Fuji Speedway and the like, this is Kawasaki's first turbo-charged supersport.

The GPz900R is released in Monterey, California at a press introduction and test riding session. Sales of the first "Ninja" (US naming) commence the following year.



### Ninja named "Bike of the Year"

The GPz900R rocks the world when it is released. The new model is equipped with Kawasaki's first liquid-cooled, DOHC, 16-valve 4-cylinder engine (max power is 115 PS) and a light, compact chassis. With a top speed of more than 250 km/h and able to run the 0-400 m in 10.552 s the GPz900R rewrites the motorcycle record books and takes the top spot as the world's fastest bike. When sales start in 1984, it is named "Bike of the Year" by magazines all over the world. Its side-drive cam, diamond frame, unique full fairing and other features that distinguish it from competing models earn it great popularity. Receiving various refinements over the years, it continues to be manufactured in present day and still retains its popularity.

Sales of the domestic GPz750R commence. From this point on, many Kawasaki motorcycles feature liquid-cooled DOHC engines with 4-valve heads.

**1984**

Sales of the Vulcan 750, Kawasaki's first V-Twin American-style Cruiser, commence.

Sales of the KR250, a replica model of Kawasaki's FIM World Championship-winning racer, commence.

**1985**



Sales of the Eliminator (900 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new Sports-Cruiser uses the engine from the GPz900R.

# 1990

1985

250 Casual Sports



Sales of the 250 Casual Sports commence. Nicknamed the "CS", it features a liquid-cooled, DOHC Single.

Overseas sales of the KDX200 commence. The new Enduro model has an air-cooled Single that features the newly developed KIPS.

KDX200



Sales of the GPz400R commence. The GPz1000RX, GPz600R, GPz250R and the fairingless FX400R complete the supersport line-up.

## Instant Best Seller

The GPz400R's excellent brakes and suspension and its original design make it extremely popular; it becomes a best seller as soon as its sales commence. Kawasaki's unique sports bike philosophy, evidenced by the modern design of its newly developed aluminium frame, sets the new machine apart from competing racer replicas. The GPz400R enjoys the position of "Best 400" for many years.

GPz400R



1986

GPX750R



Sales of the GPX750R, a full-fairing supersport model, commence.

Sales of the GPX250R and the GPX400R commence the following year.

1987

KS-I



Sales of the KS-I (50 cm<sup>3</sup>) and the KS-II (80 cm<sup>3</sup>), small-size dual purpose models with air-cooled single engines, commence. The new machines allow riders to enjoy both on-road and off-road fun. The bikes mark the beginning of the "Superbikers' Mini Racer" boom.

1988

KX125SR



ZX-10



Atsushi Okabe wins the All-Japan Motocross Championship for the second year in a row riding a KX125SR.

Overseas sales of the ZX-10 (1000 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new machine features an extremely rigid aluminium E-box frame inherited from Kawasaki works racers. With a light weight of 225 kg, it has a top speed of 270 km/h, guaranteeing Kawasaki's position as the fastest motorcycle in the world.

In Japan, sales of the ZX-4 (400 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence.

1989

ZXR750



Sales of the ZXR Series, including the ZXR750 and the ZXR400, commence. These supersport machines have styling identical to that of Kawasaki works racers.

Sales of the Zephyr (400 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence.

## Zephyr Causes Market Sensation

Developed mainly by young Kawasaki engineers, the Zephyr's design concept was to create a "real" bike that "got back to basics". Released in the middle of the racer replica boom of the mid 1980's, the Zephyr's refreshingly simple design, low and mid range performance, air-cooled four-cylinder engine, and the prevalent idea of "fun riding" change the market as motorcycle fans swiftly respond to the new machine. Sales explode; the Zephyr is the best-selling 400 cm<sup>3</sup> machine until 1992, giving birth to the "Myth of the Zephyr".

When sales of the Zephyr 750 and Zephyr 1100 start in 1990 and 1992 respectively, they also create great sensations.

Zephyr



1990

Sales of the new Kawasaki flagship model, the ZZ-R1100, commence.

In the same year, sales of the ZZ-R600 and the ZZ-R400, models in the same series, commence.

ZZ-R1100



## First Ram Air System Hits the Market

At the time of its debut, the ZZ-R1100 has an unbelievable maximum power of 147 PS. To increase engine power output, it employs the first "Ram Air System" – a duct at the bottom of the front face that directs air directly into the air cleaner. The "monster bike" also features the first speedometer with a 320 km/h dial. For the next six years it is the world's undisputed "King of Speed". This model gives birth to the "flagship" category.

1991

Balius



Estrella



Sales of the Balius (250 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new naked sports model features a liquid-cooled, DOHC 4-cylinder engine.

Sales of the Estrella (250 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new classic sports model features an air-cooled single-cylinder engine.

1992

Xanthus



In the AMA Superbike Championship, Kawasaki wins its first Daytona 200 and Scott Russell, riding a ZXR750R, wins the rider championship.

Sales of the Xanthus (400 cm<sup>3</sup>), a road sports model with innovative styling, commence.

1993

ZXR-7



In the FIM Endurance World Championship, Kawasaki racers riding the ZXR-7 win the Le Mans 24-Hour Race for the second year in a row and the Suzuka 8-Hour Endurance Race for the first time.

Overseas sales of the Ninja ZX-9R (900 cm<sup>3</sup>), commence. The new supersport model features an aluminium frame.

**1994** Kawasaki is the FIM Endurance World Championship series manufacturer's champion for the fourth year in a row. The bike that earns Kawasaki the title of "Endurance King" is the ZXR750R.

Sales of the ZRX (400 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new naked sports model combines straight-line, powerful styling with a refined version of the ZZ-R400's engine.

**1996** GPz1100 ABS



Sales of the GPz1100 ABS commence. The new supersport model features an anti-lock braking system.

Sales of the Zephyr X (400 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new road sports model features an engine with 4-valve heads.

Vulcan1500 Classic



Sales of the Vulcan 1500 Classic commence. The new American-style Cruiser, which features a V-Twin engine, is the world's largest displacement mass production motorcycle.

ZRX1100



Sales of the ZRX1100 commence. The new large-displacement road sports model features a bikini cowl.



Super Sherpa



Cheer (moped produced in Thailand)

Sales of the Super Sherpa (250 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. The new multi-purpose off-road model's performance makes it the ideal wilderness partner.

**1998** Sales of the D-Tracker (250 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence. Featuring a liquid-cooled 4-valve Single, the D-Tracker creates a new category of motorcycle.

Sales of the W650, a re-release of the popular W1, commence.

W650



#### Classic Beauty in a Modern Machine

Following a "new nostalgic" concept, the new sports model's appeal lies in its elegant simplicity. The W650 combines the beauty of a redesigned air-cooled Vertical Twin engine, elegant high-class styling and a compact chassis. Its instant popularity among a wide variety of riders makes it a hit model.

## 2000

**2000** Overseas sales of the Ninja ZX-12R (1200 cm<sup>3</sup>) commence.

Ninja ZX-12R



#### New Millennium Flagship

The flagship model of the Kawasaki's supersport "Ninja" Series. Intended to be the successor to the King of Speed throne, the Ninja ZX-12R features the first mass-produced aluminium monocoque frame, an advanced technology liquid-cooled DOHC 16-valve In-Line Four engine with a maximum power of 178 PS, an aerodynamically crafted chassis and numerous other unique features.

**2001**

ZRX1200S



ZRX1200R



ZRX1200



Sales of the ZRX1200 commence. The successor to the ZRX1100 features an increased displacement and comes in one of three styles: the half-cowled ZRX1200S, the bikini-cowled ZRX1200R and the naked ZRX1200.

Vulcan1500 Mean Streak



Sales of the Vulcan 1500 Mean Streak commence. The sporty new Cruiser combines a long and low chassis, high-performance components and custom styling.

**2002**

ZZ-R1200



KLX110



250TR



Sales of the ZZ-R1200 commence. An evolution of the famous ZZ-R1100 superbike, the new supersport tourer combines superbike performance, sport touring comfort and avant-garde styling.

Sales of the KLX110, a kids enduro model, commence.

Sales of the 250TR commence. The domestic-market retro street bike gains popularity among young riders.

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