

Italian Bike Week 2026: passion for motorcycles brings 135,000 two-wheel fans to Lignano

Now in its fifth edition and firmly established on the motorcycle calendar, the major end-of-summer event drew huge crowds of riders and enthusiasts. Special guest: Giampaolo Morelli, star of the TV series 'Ispettore Coliandro'

According to **Lignano Sabbiadoro's** tourism department, **135,000 people** attended the **Italian Bike Week 2026,** the free-admission motorcycle event that brought the magic of two wheels back to the seaside town in the province of Udine **from 17 to 20 September**. Born out of the extraordinary success of the 2020 and 2021 editions of Biker Fest International, which were postponed until late summer because of Covid, IBW has grown into a fully established major event. Its **fifth edition** consolidates its position as **Europe's third-largest motorcycle rally festival**, after Biker Fest International itself and Austria's European Bike Week.

VISITORS FROM AROUND THE WORLD – Special guest for 2026 was actor, writer and director **Giampaolo Morelli.** *«This is a world I love and feel part of. I own a beautiful satin-black Harley Sportster 883 Iron, which I ride every day through Rome's traffic»* he said at the opening ceremony. *«I fell in love with it the first time I saw it in a showroom!»*. Best known to the general public for playing *Ispettore Coliandro* in the TV series of the same name, Morelli has also developed a fondness for Friuli Venezia Giulia: *«I'm about to start shooting my next film in Trieste, which I'm both directing and starring in. And it's a wonderful region for motorcycling»*.

Massimo Brini, the Adriatic town's councillor for tourism, was equally pleased: *«Once again, Italian Bike Week has proved itself an event worthy of what Lignano is and aims to remain: a centre of excellence for tourism. It is a major event that enables our hospitality industry to extend the tourist season and once again position itself as a destination for Italian and international visitors, particularly those from Austria and Germany»*. This **international appeal** is intrinsic to Italian Bike Week, as demonstrated by the many bikers who travelled from **outside Europe**, including **Australia**, the **United States, Canada, Russia** and **Turkey**. One of them was Ugur, a 54-year-old rider who arrived from Istanbul on Thursday after covering more than 1,500 km: *«I discovered IBW online, and after seeing the pictures I told myself I couldn't miss it. I rode through a lot of rain on my way across the Balkans, but it doesn't matter: the welcome I've received here makes it all worthwhile!»*.

OFF-ROAD, TARMAC AND CUSTOM BIKES – The weather did its best to spoil the party, but after a rain-soaked opening warm-up day, IBW soon hit its stride with an increasingly varied and **extensive programme**. The ever-present **Custom Bike Show** (read the full press release **here**) celebrated the

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event's historical and cultural roots, bringing together custom bike builders from across the continent. This year it was joined by the **ARTigliate Custom Contest**, dedicated to off-road custom builds. And it is precisely off-road riding that sets ITALIAN BIKE WEEK apart from Biker Fest: the spotlight shifts to the dust and mud of unpaved terrain, with **Adventure, Enduro, Motocross** and **Scrambler** motorcycles taking centre stage at a time of year when manufacturers traditionally unveil their latest knobbly-tyred models. While Aprilia, Cyclone, Kove, Morbidelli and Moto Guzzi held **road-going demo rides** in the Stadium Area, the **Off-Road Arena** came alive with free test rides on a marked dirt track aboard models from AJP, Yamaha, KTM, Redmoto and Rieju (the latter presenting its brand-new 2027 MR300i in an Italian national premiere). **Can-Am** and, above all, **Honda** were active in both areas; alongside its test bikes, Honda also brought its **Young Riders School**, designed for newcomers and beginner motorcyclists. More than **2,000 demo rides** were completed over the weekend.

Throughout four days, IBW also offered plenty of other activities for enthusiasts who prefer getting their tyres dirty. Professional and amateur riders alike could test their skills on the 7 km of routes laid out for **Enduro Days**, two days of full-throttle action organised by the FMI-affiliated 'Sabbiadoro' MotoClub (which also ran **Enduro Moto-Therapy**, an exciting riding experience for people with disabilities). Less race-oriented and more focused on adventure riding were the **Adventure Rides**: mini-rids through which the Trieste-based MV Adventure association guided enduro riders into some of Friuli's most secluded and unspoilt areas. On Saturday night, the group stayed at Malga Cuar, in the heart of the Julian Prealps, enjoying a spectacular panoramic view of the Tagliamento Valley.

The **MotoTour** *Towards the 2027 Italian Capital of Culture – Discovering Pordenone*, meanwhile, followed paved roads mapped out by the FMI-affiliated 'Danilo Vian' Moto Club. During the same days, the capital of western Friuli was also hosting 'Pordenonelegge', a nationally renowned literary festival that riders had the opportunity to explore independently after guided tours of the city and the Noncello river landing, in the riverside park of ancient *Portus Naonis*.

A CELEBRATION FOR EVERYONE – Speaking of books, the ITALIAN BIKE WEEK main stage hosted a range of events, including the presentation of the novel ***Rockers – The Proud Freaks***, published by Battello Stampatore. Its author, Flow, describes it as *«an immersive journey through light and shadow in an alternative universe»* inhabited by eccentric characters who are proud to be different. On Friday evening, he discussed the book with actor **Diego Pagotto**, who is involved in a project to adapt the story for the screen. On Saturday, psychologist Dr Silvia Ave explored the **psychological aspects of recovery** after a road accident. In her talk ***The Biker's Mind After an Accident***, she and one of her patients discussed the process of rebuilding confidence and awareness on the road that is essential to getting back on a motorcycle safely. *«Because psychological well-being»* Dr Ave explained *«also matters to those who travel, fall, get back up and confront their own limits»*.

The two competition shows that enlivened Saturday afternoon were decidedly more light-hearted. Conceived by Fabrizio Bottos, winner of the World Beard and Moustache Championships in 2019 and 2023, the **Beard's Race** brought together 35 contestants from all over Italy, competing with their beards, moustaches and goatees. The winners in the six categories were Michele Del Fabbro (Short Beard),

Giovanni Duri (Long Beard), Luciano Miscoria (Partial Beard), Luciano Sinatti (Freestyle Beard), Luca Moretti (Goatee) and Juri Pulvirenti (Moustache). Narciso Signoroni also received the Bruno Panza Memorial Award. The **Pin Up Contest**, organised by Francesca 'Lady BB' Turello, brought 1950s-inspired looks, poses and choreography to the stage in a playful blend of glamour and humour. In the end, Madame Liù, whose real name is Liousy Dose, took the crown of Miss Pin Up Italian Bike Week 2026.

Entertainment for the many visitors to the **130 stands** in the Luna Park Area was provided by **11 bands,** taking turns on stage from Thursday evening and filling the weekend with a truly **rock-driven soundtrack**. The live music programme featured Lowlight, Hard Pop, Mr. Crowley, Dingo Brothers, Guns Illusion, Red B, AC/DI, Napster, The Snakes, The Sempires and Desert Dreamers. With a mix of classic rock, hard rock, metal, punk and open-road vibes, **Easy Rock** once again served as the event's radio partner.

EXPERIENCES TO SHARE – The weekend ended with the thunderous **US Car on the Beach** (read the full press release **here**), but its more than **200 American cars** were certainly not the only vehicles parading through Lignano's streets, cheered on by crowds lining the pavements and seafront promenade. The playful **Ciao in Ciabatte** parade, in which a buzzing swarm of mopeds and scooters headed for the beach to bid summer one last farewell, was followed on Saturday evening by the **Saturday Night Parade**. This magical gathering on the move brought thousands of motorcycles together in the square outside Luna Park shortly before sunset, before they set off as one through the city streets. It was a thrilling spectacle of lights and sounds for riders and spectators alike, including those lucky enough to admire the seemingly endless procession of motorcycles from above on the scenic **helicopter flights** offered by Alpen Rotor.

TAKING STOCK – *«Anyone who has organised a new event knows how difficult it is to get it properly established. Five years ago, when this adventure began, we could never have imagined success on this scale, especially in such a short time»* said organiser **Moreno Persello**. His experience with Biker Fest International inspired this second event, which is, in every sense, a spin-off of the original. *«Back then, I admit, we had our doubts and reservations. Having two events in the same location, one to open the season and one to close it, was something only a motorcycle 'Mecca' like Daytona could boast. We knew there was a considerable risk of biting off more than we could chew. On the other hand, Biker Fest itself, which is now known worldwide and welcomed 275,000 visitors in 2026, took twenty years to reach the figures IBW has achieved in just five. In short, it hasn't been easy, but we can certainly say we're satisfied. And, I admit, also a little surprised by growth that has been steady and continuous and, in hindsight, remarkably rapid».*

«Italian Bike Week has been an exciting challenge, full of unknowns but also incredibly stimulating» added his son **Micke Persello**, who has worked alongside his father at the helm of the organisation for many years. *«With Biker Fest, back in the 1990s, we believed in the multi-brand demo ride format, which has since become a standard feature of almost every industry event. We have seen growing enthusiasm among the motorcycle manufacturers that have worked with us since then, thanks to the effectiveness of test rides in engaging motorcyclists. The feedback we receive from brands points to a high conversion rate into sales, often completed*

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on site. For enthusiasts, meanwhile, it is an almost unique opportunity to try and compare several models from different manufacturers on the same day, or even within a few hours, and choose the one that best suits their needs. It is a win-win arrangement that benefits manufacturers and customers alike and helps shape the motorcycle market».

Building on this experience, IBW took a further step in 2022, extending a similar format to the **off-road sector** so that riders could test new models that would otherwise be difficult to try, let alone compare, including specialist enduro and motocross bikes. *«There was a gap for a non-competitive event of this kind devoted to off-road riding»* Persello concluded *«In this respect, Italian Bike Week has been, and continues to be, a testing ground open to new opportunities, allowing us to explore new directions. The excellent response to all our activities, including those that differ significantly from the more traditional approach of our big sister event, Biker Fest, encourages us to continue along this path».*

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