



## Destination

MotoJava, San Francisco, CA

# Who Needs Starbucks?



BY ALISA CLICKENGER

PHOTOS BY DANIEL BUERGI

**“F**riends don't let friends ride to Starbucks,” says the web site. And who needs to, when a place like MotoJava exists? To my way of thinking, it's brilliant. A clever combination of the two centers of my personal universe: a coffee shop and a motorcycle shop sharing the same space.

On the moto side, every spare inch of the floor is covered with an eclectic variety of brands — BMW, Kawasaki, Triumph, Honda, Suzuki — and an assortment of styles: standard, cruiser, sportbike, dirt bike motorcycle. If it's metric, the folks at MotoJava will buy it, tune it up, and sell it. They also carry helmets, gloves, jackets, and other motorcycling accessories. In the hour I spent in the store, they sold one motorbike and, from what I overheard, gave a lot of really good advice to a new rider who'd just graduated from the MSF Beginning Rider course.

The motorcycle shop was originally Paul Somerville's idea: he'd been thinking about the concept for a long time, and at one point he mentioned the idea to his friend and fellow racer, Joe Pardo. Joe's wheels got turning, and he made their dream a reality. Joe, his wife, Saskia, and Paul had won a racing championship together, so it was a pretty sure bet that they'd also be successful as a business team.

While they mostly do repair and service work on the bikes they have sold, they will service your metric bike if you're willing to wait for an opening on

one of their benches. “Since there are just two of us spinning wrenches, and we don't have any employees, we've been at capacity from day one,” Paul says. “By keeping our service mainly limited to performing tune-ups for folks who bought bikes from us, we can make sure we have capacity to look after the bikes we've sold.” Since opening the doors 2002, they've refurbished and sold over 1,000 motorcycles. Quite often to repeat customers, like Marija (pronounced Maria) Helt, who liked doing business with Paul and Joe so much that she invested in the café end of the operation.

On the java side, the décor is a testament of many years of accumulated motorcycling paraphernalia, an assorted collection with a lot of clever and only a little kitsch. Posters and racing flags adorn the walls, along with autographed pictures, leathers, and bike parts. A collection of miniature motorbikes hangs from the ceiling. Marija's Ducati is tucked into one corner; her riding gear, including motocross boots, is tossed on a chair in the other. Casual conversation with Marija reveals that the Ducati's her project bike, while her daily commuter, a Honda XL185, is parked out front.

A comfy leather sofa has a constant stream of patrons sitting and reading or making use of the café's WiFi. Along with excellent java, one can also order a yummy frittata or homemade baked goods to munch on. Healthy lunch fare is also available in the form of sandwiches or soup, and you can even have a beer if it's your day off.

While not all patrons arrive on two wheels, plenty do as do all of the owners, for whom motorcycles are the primary form of transportation. There's metered motorcycle parking in front of the shop, and if you're looking to meet other enthusiasts, come on a Saturday morning when riders gather before heading off to destinations in the Bay Area and beyond. Motos and java? Who needs Starbucks? **RB**



## Gettin' There



GPS coordinates:

N37°46.27806, W122°24.51858

**M**otoJava is on the corner of Ninth and Bryant in the SoMa (south of Market) district of San Francisco, near AT&T Park downtown. From San Jose and points south, take the Ninth Street/Civic Center exit off Highway 101 North, then follow the Ninth Street ramp; stay to your left. From Oakland, take Interstate 80 West across the Bay Bridge and exit Ninth Street. From the Golden Gate Bridge, follow signs for Highway 101 South. Take Lombard Street and turn right on Van Ness Avenue. Turn left on Fell Street and cross Market Street; Fell becomes 10th Street. Turn left on Bryant and go one block.

Motorcycle shop hours are Tuesday-Friday 10 am to 6 pm; Saturday 10 am to 5 pm (closed Sunday and Monday). Cafe hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 am to 4:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am to 4 pm. ■

hard data

MotoJava

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