FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1965 Harley-Davidson Panhead Buyer's Guide

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IRONHEAD

1965 Harley-Davidson Panhead — Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

IronHead single-year guide · Model year 1965 only · Covers all 1965 Panhead Big Twins — the first Electra Glide: FLB, FLFB, FLHB, FLHFB · The 1964 Duo-Glide and the 1966 Shovelhead are out of scope except where differences are noted

Factory-correct restoration guides for classic motorcycles

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1965 only — the FIRST Electra Glide and the LAST Panhead. FLB, FLFB (foot shift), FLHB and FLHFB Super Sport — every 1965 Panhead is an electric-start B model with 12-volt electrics.
- **Engine:** 74ci (73.66 cu in) 45-degree air-cooled OHV V-twin; 3-7/16 x 3-31/32 in bore x stroke; 7.25:1 compression (FL), 8.0:1 (FLH). Aluminum heads, hydraulic lifters, external head-oil lines. Stronger crankcases, stronger clutch.
- **New for 1965:** electric start (B suffix); 12-volt electrical system; new frame to accommodate the battery; oil tank moved to the left side of the frame; aluminum primary cover; automatic spark advance; five-gallon tank on the foot-shift model; revised taillight; dual headlights and fender tip standard equipment.
- **Transmission:** 4-speed constant-mesh; hand shift/foot clutch standard, foot shift/hand clutch optional.
- **Chassis:** new swingarm frame (battery accommodation); Hydra-Glide telescopic fork with wider sliders; front drum; hydraulically actuated rear drum.
- **Wheels/tires:** Wire-spoked wheels; 5.00 x 16 fitment (standard Big Twin fitment; confirm against the factory service manual for the exact year).
- **Dimensions:** 60-inch wheelbase; 783 lbs (FLH, per the compiled year-page research).
- **1965 colors:** Black, Holiday Red, Police Silver, Police Birch White (the stated colors shown with Birch White tank panels); extra-cost Hi-Fi Red, Hi-Fi Blue.

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- **Identification:** No frame VIN — the engine serial (left case, between the cylinders, e.g. 65FLB1234) is the ownership number. Belly numbers on both crankcase halves must match each other. The B in the model letters (FLB, FLFB, FLHB, FLHFB) denotes factory electric start.
- **Production:** the compiled source lists 6,930 beside the FLB model for 1965; the FLFB, FLHB, and FLHFB figures are not reported — treat the listed figure as the source's model figure, not a proven total (Harley-Davidson published no official year totals).
- **1965 price new:** the compiled year-page research lists no 1965 Panhead price — no reliable price figure located.
- **Key 1965-only details:** the only year that is BOTH a Panhead AND an Electra Glide — 12 volts, electric start, the new frame, and the aluminum primary are the one-year combination. A "1964 Electra Glide" is always mis-titled.

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1. Manufacturer history: Harley-Davidson

Harley-Davidson was founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1903 by William S. Harley and Arthur Davidson, with Walter and William A. Davidson joining the effort. The first factory went up in 1906; the first V-twin appeared in 1909. Through the 1910s and 1920s Harley built its name on V-twins and racing success; the 45-cubic-inch flathead models of the 1930s kept the company alive through the Depression, and the 1936 EL Knucklehead brought overhead valves to the Big Twin line.

1965 was the year Milwaukee modernized the Big Twin without changing its soul: the Panhead engine that had debuted in 1948 got electric start, a 12-volt system, a stronger bottom end, and automatic advance — the most significant single-year update of the entire Panhead era. The Electra Glide name began here. It was also the end: for 1966 the Shovelhead's aluminum heads replaced the pans, and the Panhead era closed after eighteen years.

For the restorer, the authority is the factory literature: the Harley-Davidson Panhead service manuals and the 1965 parts catalog, backed by Bruce Palmer's *How to Restore Your Harley-Davidson*, Greg Field's *Original Harley-Davidson Panhead*, and the production research compiled by the Panhead & Flathead Site. This guide cites those sources throughout.

2. Model history: the Panhead Big Twin, 1948–1965

The 1948 Panhead kept the Knucklehead's proven crankcases, flywheels, and gear train and changed everything above the cylinders: finned aluminum heads with bronze valve seats and steel inserts, pushrod-operated hydraulic lifters, and redesigned rocker arms under pan-shaped covers. 1949 brought the Hydra-Glide telescopic fork, the 8-inch front drum, and the Brooks Stevens restyle; 1950 brought redesigned heads with enlarged ports; 1951 brought the two-piece cam, machined rocker sockets, and the Linkert M-74B; 1952 brought the foot-shift option, an all-high-compression lineup, and the end of the 61ci EL; 1953 relocated the hydraulic lifters below the pushrods and introduced the FLE Traffic Combination; 1954 was the Golden Anniversary year; 1955 introduced the FLH Super Sport; 1956 gave the FLH its "Victory" high-lift cam; 1957 was the last rigid year; 1958 introduced the Duo-Glide; 1959 refined it; 1960 brought the aluminum nacelle and the durability upgrades; 1961 brought the dual-point, single-fire ignition; 1962 brought the tombstone speedometer; 1963 brought the external head-oil lines and the wider rear brake; 1964 was the last Duo-Glide.

1965 changed the motorcycle's relationship with its rider: electric start ended the ritual of the kick, 12 volts doubled the electrical headroom, and automatic advance retired the manual grip — all wrapped around the same Panhead engine that had been evolving since 1948. The B suffix on the model designation denotes electric start.

The model letters work like this. **FL** = 74ci high-compression (7.25:1). **FLH** = Super Sport — 8.0:1 compression, strengthened bottom end, the performance model. **S** = sidecar gearing. **F** (not first letter) = foot shift. **B** (1965) = electric start.

Year	What changed
1948	First Panhead: aluminum heads, hydraulic lifters, internal oiling; wishbone frame; springer fork (one year only); chromed pan covers (one year only); E/EL and F/FL.
1949	Hydra-Glide telescopic fork replaces the springer; Brooks Stevens restyle; front brake grows 7.25 to 8 inches; Harley-Davidson makes its own breaker points.
1950	Redesigned heads with enlarged ports (about 10 percent more power); fixed-jet carburetor with revised jetting; remote oil filter; primary screws to 6/12 o'clock; die-cast fork sliders.

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Year	What changed
1951	Two-piece cam with ramps both sides; rocker arms machined with pushrod sockets; mid-year Linkert M-74B carburetor (stays through 1965); larger pinion shaft; script tank emblem.
1952	Foot-shift option (ELF/FLF); all Panheads high-compression; last year for the 61ci EL; rotating exhaust valves late-year; generator model 52.
1953	Lifters relocated below pushrods; FLE Traffic Combination introduced; 4-rib gearcase cover; 24-roller pinion shaft; revised generator; new muffler; 74-only lineup.
1954	Golden Anniversary brass medallion; tapered pinion shaft; Jubilee trumpet horn; first optional dual exhaust; winged fireball emblems; transitional frames.
1955	First FLH Super Sport — 8:1 compression, 60 hp @ 5,500 rpm, strengthened bottom end with Timken mains, larger oil pump, polished rocker covers; oval taillight; "V" emblem.
1956	FLH "Victory" high-lift cam and flow-through air cleaner (about 12 percent more power); redesigned right crankcase with new check-valve oiling path; new speedometer.
1957	Last rigid year: round Lucite tank emblem (first plastic emblem); plastic fender tip; polished aluminum rocker covers; steel-alloy valve guides from February 1; stronger springs from 57FLH4444.
1958	First Duo-Glide: swingarm rear suspension; step-down straight-leg frame; horseshoe oil tank; hydraulically actuated rear drum; thicker head fins; brush generator; O-ring intake seals.
1959	Arrow-Flite tank emblem; green neutral indicator on foot-shift dash; chrome front fender tip; black footboards; optional center stand; revised taillight lens.
1960	Two-piece aluminum headlight nacelle; Stellite-faced exhaust valves; rail-type oil-control rings; extra-heavy valve springs; revised clutch; new taillight.
1961	Dual-point, single-fire ignition with individual condensers; rear-cylinder timing mark added mid-year; revised pushrods; four-point-star tank badge; revised taillight.
1962	"Tombstone" speedometer; three round indicator lights on the dashboard; brushed-aluminum trim pieces; revised taillight.
1963	External oil lines to the cylinder heads; wider rear brake hub and shoes; round turn-signal housings; fiberglass saddlebags; new bar-and-shield tank emblem.

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Year	What changed
1964	LAST DUO-GLIDE: breather hole in the primary housing; oil-pressure switch; hollow hex timer adjuster; revised taillight.
1965	**FIRST ELECTRA GLIDE, LAST PANHEAD: electric start (B suffix); 12-volt electrics; new frame for the battery; stronger cases and clutch; automatic spark advance; aluminum primary cover; five-gallon tank on the foot-shift model; revised taillight.**

The company context matters when judging a bike. The postwar boom made the late 1940s Harley's biggest years yet; by the mid-1950s British imports were pressuring the sporting end of the market (answered by the 1952 K-model and the 1957 Sportster), while the Big Twin settled into its long career as America's touring motorcycle. The 1969 AMF takeover came after the Panhead era; no Panhead left Milwaukee under AMF ownership.

3. What is unique about the 1965 Panhead

The 1965 is the only motorcycle that is simultaneously a Panhead and an Electra Glide — the one-year intersection of the two names. Everything below is the 1965 checklist, and every item on it is year-specific:

- **Electric start** — the B suffix (FLB, FLHB) denotes factory electric

start. A kick-only 1965 is the base FL/FLH; a B-model converted back to kick is a demoted bike.

- **12-volt electrical system** — the first year; the entire electrical

system is different from the 1964's 6-volt.

- **New frame** to accommodate the battery — the 1965 frame is not the

1964 frame; check the battery box area.

- **Stronger crankcases** and **stronger clutch** — built for the starter's

torque.

- **Automatic spark advance** — the manual advance grip is gone.
- **Aluminum primary cover** — new for the year.
- **Five-gallon tank on the foot-shift model.**
- **Revised taillight.**

What did NOT exist in 1965 (common mix-ups):

- No Shovelhead top end — the Shovelhead is 1966. A "1965 Shovelhead" is

always a swapped engine.

- No 1964 Electra Glide — the Electra Glide name starts in 1965.

1965 buyer cautions:

- **Kick versus electric.** The B suffix in the engine serial is the

authority — verify the serial matches the equipment, because conversions run both directions.

- **1965-only parts.** The frame, the aluminum primary, the 12-volt

electrical components, and the starter drive are all one-year — check against the 1965 parts catalog, not a 1966 Shovelhead book.

- **Reference serial.** Model letters for 1965 Panheads carry the B suffix

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(FLB, FLFB, FLHB, FLHFB); a claimed 1965 with no B in the serial needs documentation — verify the serial against the title and the equipment.

4. Technical restoration data — 1965 Harley-Davidson Panhead

4.1 Frame and engine numbers (1965)

Pre-1970 Harleys carry no frame VIN — the engine number is the ownership number. It is stamped on the left crankcase between the cylinders, in the form year-digits + model letters + sequential number, for example:

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65FLB1234
65 = model year | FLB = model | 1234 = sequential number
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(Serial-format example — verify against the title and the equipment.)

The **B** in the model letters (FLB, FLFB, FLHB, FLHFB) denotes factory electric start. Foot-shift (F) and sidecar (S) suffixes may not appear in the stamped ownership serial even when the bike is a factory foot-shift or sidecar model. The frame carries only manufacturing stampings and casting numbers.

Belly numbers are stamped on the bottom of each crankcase half. They were stamped by the machinist to identify a matched pair of cases through line boring and final machining — the two halves must carry the SAME belly number, and the belly number has no direct relationship to the engine serial.

4.2 Engine specifications (1965)

Item	FL	FLH (Super Sport)
Configuration	45° air-cooled OHV V-twin; hydraulic lifters; aluminum heads; external head-oil lines; stronger cases	Same, strengthened bottom end
Displacement	73.66 cu in	73.66 cu in
Bore x stroke	3-7/16 x 3-31/32 in (87.3 x 100.8 mm)	Same
Compression ratio	7.25:1	8.0:1
Carburetor	Linkert M-74B	Linkert M-74B
Ignition	12-volt battery; automatic spark advance; dual-point timer	Same
Starting	Electric start (every 1965 Panhead is a B-suffix model: FLB, FLFB, FLHB, FLHFB)	Same
Clutch	Dry multi-plate, strengthened for 1965	Same
Lubrication	Dry sump; external oil lines to heads; gear-driven pump	Same; larger pump; Timken mains

Note: no factory output figure is documented for 1965 in the surviving factory literature consulted — the 1955–1958 figures are not carried forward here, and period advertising claims vary. Do not quote an output number for a 1965.

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