

THE LONGEST DAY

TAKE TWO NEW GS RIVALS INTO A SHOWER? THESE THREE BIKES WILL APPARENTLY TAKE YOU ANYWHERE, SO WE RODE THEM FROM LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS. AND BACK AGAIN. NON-STOP

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PICS BY: FLOW IMAGES



The thrill and freedom of motorcycling has, for many riders, been defined by BMW's iconic GS series for a whole 30 years. Of course, the GS has also been responsible for an army of 'Charlie and Ewans' cruising the King's Road in full trim, with panniers dented to hell by the cabs they tried to squeeze between.

There's been no shortage of pretenders to the crown, and some have run the GS damn close. But in recent years there's been little to challenge it, and it's been five years since we last tested it against its peers. So why bother now? Well, not only is it the 30th anniversary of the GS this year, but two new bikes have entered the fray with the same aspiration laid on each; the new GS-beater.

Ducati's Multistrada had got so long in the tooth that archaeologists would get randy every time one got stuck in the mud. However, its lack of development couldn't numb what was a riot of a

bike. It was uglier than a Croydon cage fighting mother of 12, so with the adventure section of the market looking vaguely buoyant, Ducati felt it was time to spoil us. Electronic suspension, traction control, ABS and the motor from their superbike, all barely contained in a comfortable continent basher? Certainly worth a look.

Then Yamaha finally stopped showing us turban-wrapped frames and the new Super Ténéré emerged like Laurence from the sands. It looks the part, boasts traction control and ABS, and Dakar-bred knowledge, but is it also capable of kicking up a desert storm?

Land's End (LE) to John O'Groats (JOG) seemed like a fair test. There's no point nancying around for 200 miles and claiming they're up to the job. But LE JOG seemed too easy, so we decided to do JOG LE too, without stopping for anything but fuel and sarnies. Roll on 1,703.5 miles in 30hrs 4mins. ►

JOHNNY CAB

Why don't I just keep my big mouth shut? Firstly I let slip my resemblance to the taxi driver in the film 'Total Recall' and now I was about to ride the entire length of the country AND back again without hint of a snooze or stop beyond Ginsters and fuel. But the challenge was laid before me; the longest trip I had ever done, testing three motorcycles I had little to no experience of. It was time to man up.

In preparation for the jaunt, I thought long and hard about the kit I'd wear more than the ride itself - piss poor preparation, and all that. So I got toggled up in my Knox waterproof undersuit, back and chest protector, my new Spada Adventure Jacket and my Shoei Hornet lid with its peak that would come in handy should it ever shine. And I'm pleased to report that my painstaking research into kit paid off, as the only problem I had was trying to work out which pocket of my Spada jacket I'd slipped the Multistrada key

in. Well, that and looking a knob riding with a clear visor and sunglasses.

Once the mile munching began I thanked the Lord we didn't have intercoms on the journey as I sang happy Madness ditties - House of Fun, Baggly Trousers and It Must be Love - to Land's End. But by the time we were north and hit Carlisle the internal playlist had changed and now it was The Smiths "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now". In the final leg home, anything that rhymed with "Moby you're a Bastard" was hatefully sung.

Truthfully, the journey was long and hard. Beefy Botham may have made a second career walking it but there was a bundle of cash for poor people at the end of his trip. At the end of mine was a sore arse, a terrifying lack of sleep and a budget review the next morning. Was it worth it - absolutely! Three top bikes, two cracking mates and an experience I will take to my grave. Though at some points I would have embraced the Grim Reaper on the return leg - at least I'd have caught up on some sleep!

MOBY

I heard the words come out of my mouth a long time before my brain suggested that it might be a stupid idea. "How about we try riding from Land's End to John O'Groats, and back again, without stopping?" The speed at which nobody volunteered to join me should have been a warning.

The idea began to look like a dare, though, and no man is safe when a gauntlet has been chucked. Jonny Cab was the first to crack under the pressure, and then Beaky joined the fray too. Rootsy was a late addition to the lunacy, but his arse was saved by KTM's inability to provide an SM T.

Incredibly, the more I thought about it, the more it looked like a brilliant idea. The plan was to start from Cribbs Causeway (Junction 17 on the M5) at 7pm on a weekday, ride to Land's End, then John O'G, and then back to Cribbs. The adrenalin and excitement managed to stave off the fear of actually doing it until about 36 hours before the off; doubt then crept in like

a seeping sewer, and the smell wasn't too dissimilar.

The planned day of sleep preceding take off failed to happen, but the adrenalin was building like a firework display in my nerve endings, and by the time we were standing next to the bikes at Cribbs, I was more ready than I've been for most things in life.

A mere 1,703.5miles and 30hrs 4mins later, we were back where we'd started. When I crawled into bed I'd been up for 42 hours straight, and had ridden almost 1,800miles in total. I'd be lying if I said I found it at all taxing, too. I don't know what reserve of energy and concentration I tapped into, but I felt as fresh at the end as I did at the start. In between was exhilarating, boring, frustrating and life affirming all at the same time.

What shocked me the most, is that I was already planning on doing again before we'd even got back, calculating where we wasted time, and how I firmly believe I can do it all again in just 24 hours.



AND YOUR TESTERS ARE



Richard 'Moby' Newland

With only 5,000 points to go before Moby could get a free set of tumblers on his Nectar card, Moby came up with this ruse to get him over the top. It worked, too!



Andy 'Beaky' Saunders

Got roped in to LE JOG thinking that it was a fun run. Soon discovered that riding 1,700 miles in 30 hours is not remotely fun. Well, it's not when you're wet can cold.



Charlie 'Johnny Cab' Oakman

Signed up for LE JOG not knowing that fag stops would not be tolerated and so covered himself in nicotine patches to curb his filthy smoking addiction.



BEAKY

It didn't take much consideration to decide on taking part in this epic; it was too big an opportunity to pass up, and that was persuasion enough.

The rain didn't help matters, but the journey down to Land's End and then back up all the way to Manchester was a breeze. At one point in a break from the rain I looked up whilst riding on an empty M5. To my amazement I found a sky as dark as oil with piercing light extruding through hundreds of holes. It was mesmerizing, even if I could only look at it for a few seconds.

With the real weather hitting us in Scotland, I was on the Yamaha, and with the worst weather protection of the three of us, I got a soaking. My kit let me down and with my Garmin sat nav telling me John O'Groats was still four hours away, I wasn't overly amused. A bird strike at speed was the crap icing on the shitty cake - my chest was bruised for days. I got off the bike at

Johnny Boy's gaf to find my hands shaking uncontrollably.

For the return, I was determined to be warm and dry, a change in base layer was followed by wearing a bin bag as a vest - old tactics work best. The sun had finally come out and I was toasty all the way home. Being happy meant I could actually enjoy the ride - it was no longer a chore. We were also treated to the sights as the earlier dismal Scottish welcome had lifted to reveal the beautiful scenery that engulfs the A9. We had a blast coming down and out of the land that so wants to be free.

The last stage was tough riding back through another night, but we'd done it. It was a massive effort but, and especially on reflection, I'm more than glad I went. I collapsed into bed and had eight hours sleep awaking to my phone. Fortune has it that I then had to travel another two hundred miles - get well soon Dad.



THE CONTROL TYRE

We didn't want to do LE JOG on dual-purpose OE rubber, not least because it was all on-road, but also because we didn't want manufacturers' tyre budgets to influence the result. So after testing all the bikes on OE rubber, we put all three on Dunlop's RoadSmart, the most perfect tyre we could think of for the job, and one of the few that comes in trailie and superbike rim sizes, allowing fitment to all three bikes.

We've covered thousands of miles on RoadSmarts since their launch in 2007, so we already knew how good they are. What we were really intrigued by was how they'd perform on big trailies, and on a single 1,700mile heat cycle.

The immediate benefits to all bikes in stability and handling were greater than expected, especially on the Yamaha and BMW. Both slow control and high-speed riding were transformed. It was the same for the Duke, just less dramatic. Beyond the initial benefit, the best compliment is that we never noticed them again until we arrived back at the start point, and thought to check how they'd done. The results were impressive. There was no tangible wear beyond the most subtle of flattening across the centre band. If they were still legal after another three LE JOG round trips, there'd be no surprised faces here.

The conditions were dramatically changeable, too, not just on the LE JOG, but across the whole test period, during which time the tyres covered in excess of 2,000miles on each bike. It was as warm as 26°C, as cool as 9, and on LE JOG they were asked to perform at speed, under load, without rest and switching between hot dry roads and torrential rain more times than any of us can recall. No-one had any TC moments, front-end washouts, or stability issues on any of the bikes. The same can't be said of the OE fitments. We were hugely impressed by their performance, and have no hesitation in recommending them for fast road touring.

Yamaha XT1200Z Super Ténéré

In a year when new bikes have been thin on the ground, having a completely new model to push can lead to overexcitement. Yamaha fell into this trap with the Super Ténéré, and months of build-up conspired to ape the Desmosedici's levels of messianic deliverance to the hungry masses.

This level of spin needs to be backed up by a proper shit-kicker of a motorcycle when it comes to the moment of truth, but the XT's reluctance to fire immediately off the button on collection became a metaphor for its test performance.

Don't turn over just yet though. Point the lofty front end towards a brace of sinuous bends, and the Tén' rewards you with an agility that belies it's 261kg mass. Whether on the OE fitment Battle Wings, or the excellent Dunlop RoadSmarts we used on test, the Tén' peels beautifully into a bend, and the competent chassis allows you to hold your chosen line. Of course, with a 150 rear hoop, and 19" 110 front, you'd be expecting a fast tip-in, but the surprise is how unflustered the Tén' is by rapid steering and quick direction changes. It's almost chuckable, although the Beemer bests it. Ground clearance is surprisingly lacking, though. You're not likely to bottom the bash plate out in a hurry, but even travelling very light, the pegs go down with ease on sweepers, while neither the Beemer nor Duke join in.

The traction control isn't hard to provoke on the OE rubber, while the Roadsmarts offered

nothing but drive and front-end confidence. The ham-fisted might find the TC a confidence booster off road, but it feels like an unnecessary intrusion for most. You can use the TC2 setting for a little more fun, and you can switch it off, but the ABS is not easily switchable, which is a definite aggravation off road, and will hamstring even the inexperienced.

The all-new 1199cc parallel twin boasts a claimed 108bhp and a 270° crank (just like the old TRX850), but it feels lacklustre compared to the equally bestowed BMW, while both feel broken in comparison to the Duke. It isn't slow (in context), but the torque and outright power never conspire with any malice. This makes it more manageable on unmade

roads, but 95 per cent of these bikes will never even see a grass verge, let alone a byway or desert.

Just 1,800 miles after leaving YMUK it had also drunk enough black gold that the oil light came on. Luckily, we were travelling prepared, but that's some thirst.

Talking of thirst, at rapid motorway speeds it was dry from fully fuelled after 140 miles, which isn't good. The lying bastard of an average mpg display on the flimsy clocks suggested 44 to 47mpg during our 2,000 test miles. That would be well over 200 miles per 23 litre tank full. Inaccurate enough for you?

The way the drive is delivered is

entirely pleasing though. The shaft drive is near chain-like in delivery, and when you're really banging in the miles, you can't argue with the merits of a good shaft.

Comfort is lacking, however. The saddle isn't great over distance, and the standard screen is rubbish. In either of the two bolt-on positions, it just drums and buffets, and the noise is deafening. For riding position, comfort and cossetting, it's the worst on test. The panniers are poor, too. They look like they'll disintegrate the first time you fall off, the key feels like it'll snap in the lock on use, and they're actually pretty small. Put Touratech on your speed dial.

The Tén', as competent and engaging as it can be on the right road in the right weather, is hamstrung by trying to be a GS, while delivering far less for much more of your money. Yamaha has always enjoyed a 'premium brand pricing strategy', but the Tén' is a solid £3k too pricey. And that's the one feature we're unlikely to see Yamaha improve upon. ►

Verdict 6/10

In isolation the Super Tén' feels agile, planted and interesting. Never ride anything else, and you'll be delighted.

- LOOKS TOUGH AND PURPOSEFUL, AGILITY
- DOG SLOW, ABS 'OFF' TRICKY, PRICE

DON'T BE FOOLED BY

Anyone who claims that this is a GS beater, they're talking complete shite, unless they're talking price

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



The grippy Dunlop RoadSmarts make decking the Tén easy

A few hours in the saddle is enough to make you feel your arse has done ten rounds with Tyson



YAMAHA XT1200Z SUPER TÉNÉRÉ £13,499



ENGINE

All-new 1199cc parallel twin, with crank pins set at 270° for improved performance, and a v-twin feel, and a twin-spark 4-valve per cylinder head. There's D-Mode switchable engine mapping (Sport and Touring modes), and a 3-phase traction control system with two levels of interference, and the option to switch it off completely.

CHASSIS

The Ténéré uses a steel backbone chassis member, with conventional fully adj' fork and shock (only preload and rebound adj'). The 'smart' Unified Braking System, with ABS, brakes both wheels if you touch the front brake, or you can brake independently if you use the rear first. The ABS is not (officially or easily) switchable - which is daft.

Highlights

- Shaft drive
- All-new bike
- Dry sump
- Traction Control
- 261kg
- 110bhp

TRACK

Watch the front end tuck

FAST ROAD

It'll hustle, but it ain't quick

HOOLIGAN

Only if you count verge-hopping

NEW RIDER

Tall, and a bit unwieldy

DESIRABILITY

Looks the part

ANDY'S OPINION



This feels like it should be the cheapest bike on test - and perhaps by a long way, too. Its full of little niggles that you'd want to change. The hard seat takes its toll, there's little to inspire you with its performance and you're left willing the miles to count down to blessed zero. The mediocre nature is backed up by the ABS and Traction Control systems. They work fine, but are limited in controllability. It was only its corner temperament that could dull any ill thoughts towards it. But this again is flawed, too. The Ténéré dips a peg way too early stopping the one thing it's any good at.

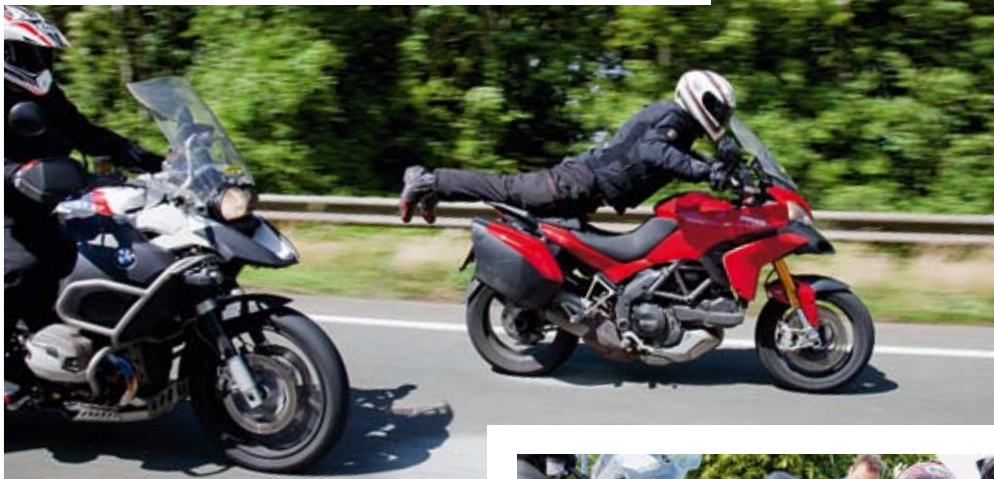
Andy's verdict 6/10

It's massive money, but the Super Ténéré isn't going to get Yamaha out of its massive financial hole

Ducati Multistrada 1200 S

Only a sportsbike can prepare you for the instant aggression of the new Multistrada's motor. Ridden alongside the Tén' and GS, it's genuinely shocking.

The 1200 churns and rumbles into life like any Ducati should, before delivering exactly the right measure of fuel into the hungry throttle bodies. The pick-up and delivery are the animal parts of the equation, the only weakness a refusal to hold a completely steady throttle. Fast getaways from standstill witness the torque throwing the front wheel skyward with wild disdain while you



As a blow-up doll, there are many cheaper options, but the 'Strada's vibes do the job



Not even the locals flirting put our brave boys off the job in hand

DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200 S £14,295



ENGINE

The 1198's Testastretta Evoluzione gets an 11° valve overlap angle, down from the 1198's 41° and the flywheel is heavier. The ride-by-wire allows the variable riding modes and the throttle bodies are reduced to 56mm, with the injectors sitting under the butterflies. The 'box and final drive ratios have been tweaked for rideability and fuel consumption.

CHASSIS

The frame weighs the same as the previous model, but torsional stiffness is upped by 19%, and it'll lean to 45°. There's a magnesium front sub-frame and die-cast aluminium single sided swinger. The big news is the Ducati Electronic Suspension (DES). The 'S' features Öhlins that look after either end and provides 170mm of travel.

Highlights

- ▶ Traction Control
- ▶ Chain drive
- ▶ Adjustable screen
- ▶ ABS
- ▶ 192kg (dry)
- ▶ 150bhp

TRACK

6 Odd riding position, but quick

FAST ROAD

7 Mental fun in the twisties

HOOLIGAN

7 Oh yes - behaving is not an option

NEW RIDER

6 The motor's a bit mad for novices

DESIRABILITY

7 Ugly, but individual, and a Duke

battle to stay aboard. Before you have time to draw breath it'll be hurrying you through a comfortable pocket of air at well into three figures.

The Multi' is dramatically more road-focussed than the GS or Tén', but this bike also aims to redefine the entire genre, with car-like technology helping to make this a multi-personality bike, with the brainstem controls at the beck and call of your left thumb.

Clever though it is, the four modes (Urban, Enduro, Touring, Sport) could easily be condensed to two without any great loss, as a deft right hand negates the need for many of the mapping changes, and the super-clever electronically adjustable suspension is equally OTT. Most riders will stick it in Sport mode and never touch the button again.

The 17" front and rear rims sport litre-class sportsbike fitments (120/70 and 190/55) for rubber, opening up a world of opportunity normally absent on a bike of this ilk. This gifts the Multi' road manners that the others can only dream of, adding to the highly capable chassis' performance. The OE Pirelli Scorpion Trail rubber is surprisingly brilliant, and the even better Roadsmart control tyres were never overcome by the Duke's power.

The downside, as we're drawing direct comparisons, is that the Duke never feels like an off-road option, regardless of mode. Any level of dirt track riding feels like forcing an 1198 down a fire track. It can do it, but it doesn't feel made to do it. Rootsy summed it up nicely, calling it 'the Porsche Cayenne of the bike world'.

You sit in the 'Strada, rather than on it, and it's a comfortable place to be. Hundreds of miles won't trouble



DON'T BE FOOLED BY

The 'go anywhere' tag, we wouldn't ride this off road unless someone had stolen all the roads

your bumholio, and the natural relationship of bars, pegs and seat mean that no part of you niggles before another. The steplessly adjustable screen, while narrow, pushes the air over your head with ease.

I can't ignore the keyless ignition any longer, though. Nothing about the system makes sense. You still have to fish the key out every 140 miles when it demands fuel. The slide-to-activate kill switch arrangement is easily confused, and sometimes refuses to react. It also randomly switched itself off twice on test without any hint of rider input. You can start it and walk away, and it'll keep running too. The key could fall from your pocket and you wouldn't know about it until you needed fuel again. It's a gimmick.

The panniers are a worry, too. They weren't waterproof, they feel flimsy, the catches are awkward, and the right one is itchy due to accommodating the exhaust.

Gripes aside, the 'Strada is a superb road bike, and the best fast sports-tourer you could buy, but while it will (rightly) steal some of the road-only GS buyers, the simple truth is that it's not a GS beater. ▶

Verdict

8/10

It's the most road-focussed by a Tarmac'd mile, and for an everyday do-it-all bike, it's mint, but pricey.

- ➕ IT'S A DUCATI, THAT ENGINE, COMFORT, LOOKS
- ➖ LACK OF OFF-ROAD SKILLS, PRICE, DELICATE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



On a twisty road, there's no competition - the Multistrada romps it. Enough, surely, to beat the GS?



ANDY'S OPINION



Unsurprisingly, the Multi' feels like a real road bike due to its 17inch rims and thus feels the most stable. The slight reluctance in turn-in is easily overcome once you know how to bully it about. The Ducati's hatred for a constant throttle was properly annoying and it needs to be driven through every bend in order to get round a turn confidently. Nutty power isn't something we'd expect from this sort of machine, but is a real boredom beater in the twisties. Surprisingly comfy, a lot of time can be spent in the Ducati's saddle enjoying the ride. But it's all too glitzy to be close enough to even smell mud, let alone ride it.

Andy's verdict 8/10

FAST GETAWAYS FROM STANDSTILL WITNESS THE TORQUE THROWING THE FRONT SKYWARDS



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
DUNLOP



BMW R 1200 GS Adventure

On the eighth day, God created the R 1200 GS, was pleased with what he saw, and rode it round the land he'd plucked from the seas on day three.

It may not be cobbled together from ethereal matter and divine intervention, but 30 years of constant development, and the German's keen understanding that to redefine the GS would fly in the face of everything they've achieved with it, has produced a genuinely incredible bike. What's even more impressive about it is that no one part stands out as being individually special.

The bike on test is a 30th Anniversary Adventure, boasting a 33-litre tank, which can deliver a range of over 300 miles between fill-ups. Even when you compare consumption, rather than range, the GS wins in this company – which can't be trivialised when you're crossing continents.

The scale of the GS can't be ignored either; it's a very big bike. But all that size disappears beneath you once you press the starter, and the Boxer twin lurches (to the right) into life. The revised 2010 motor is a peach, too. The peak figures may look barely changed from '09, but the hard work that went into the HP2-derived heads pays off in spades. It's perkier than the old, especially

from low revs, and suffers less from the thumb-numbing vibration of the old bike. It's positively lively, and the front wheel will easily dance in the air if you switch off all the electronics.

The roarty exhaust note is a welcome enduro-like accompaniment to proceedings. As you pull away into the great unknown, the bike melts around you. Only town riding and tight filtering reawaken your awareness of its scale. The balance is superb, though. It can be ridden on or off road at less than walking pace with total control. Equally, it'll barrel along at 110mph with effortless stability – mercilessly battering a hole in the air for you to sit in, unflustered and in near silence.

On twisty roads it responds to every input, arcing through corners with remarkable poise. It never feels less than completely planted, unless you're on cold OE Metzlers. On bigger roads it's secure and domineering, offering an unrivalled view of the world.

The shaft drive feels unrefined at times, adding to the unsprung weight, and causing a bit of suspension slap and bang. The 'box isn't as slick at it could be either, but you're hardly a left-foot dancer on the GS; the torque and

power make gear changes well spaced in frequency. That's not to say that it's a lazy motor, though, as the new lump loves to be thrashed, too.

The electronics are what they should be, unobtrusive and useful. Crucially, you're treated like an adult, and allowed to turn everything off, including the ABS. Hallelujah.

The rugged utilitarianism doesn't compromise the ride in any way. The seat offers plush accommodation, the riding position is one of the most natural of any bike ever built, and you can switch from seated to



It was the bike everyone wanted to be on. There's another two in the panniers as well...

DON'T BE FOOLED BY

The off-road bias looks, it's a lot of fun on Tarmac, and hard to fault in any environment, bar track use



If ever you have to ride 1,700 miles in 30 hours, take our advice and go by BMW

THE GS LOSES OUT TO THE DUCATI FOR GRUNT AND SPEED, BUT THAT'S THE ONLY TIME IT'S BETTERED

standing with no effort whatsoever – both feel completely natural.

This bike, as well as being the Adventure, also boasted a host of extras available individually or in the set-menu format from your dealer. Despite the extras, it's still the cheapest bike on test, and unequivocally dominant. It loses out to the Ducati for grunt and speed, but that's the only time it's bettered. The Touratec panniers are cavernous, and tougher than a WAG's perm-a-tan. This bike effectively took on the role of support truck for LE JOG, even

carrying fuelled jerry cans to keep the other two going.

GS sales continue to dominate the niche, and rightly so. Even if half the buyers are London lawyers who've only seen dirt while dogging, if they ever brave the world outside the city they'll find that the sea, and their talent, is their only limitation. ►

Verdict **9/10**

It's the ultimate 2x1 by far. Go anywhere, do anything, if it floated you could circle the globe unaided.

⬆ BOMB-PROOF, NIPPY, AGILE, COMFORTABLE, LOADED
⬆ SLOW TOP-END, IT'S MASSIVE

BMW R1200 GS ADVENTURE **£12,980**



ENGINE

The 2010 R 1200 GS range has been treated to relatively small, but significant, changes. The heads are where it's at, with HP2 derived modifications gifting the motor more torque and power throughout the rev range; increased response from low down; and a reduction in vibration. The rev ceiling is also 500rpm higher.

CHASSIS

Front and rear box sections mate to the engine as a stressed member, reducing weight and mass. BMW's unconventional Telelever front end, and Paralever rear, keep the GS composed with full adjustability. 2-mode ESA is available as an option, as is traction control and ABS, which are both 100% switchable, offering total rider control.

Highlights

- ▶ Telelever front end
- ▶ Switchable ABS
- ▶ Traction Control
- ▶ 33 litre tank
- ▶ 223kg
- ▶ 110bhp

TRACK

Surprisingly agile, but slow

FAST ROAD

Er, ditto really

HOOLIGAN

Only off-road, it'll wheelie though

NEW RIDER

A bit too much bike on offer

DESIRABILITY

If this is your thing, it's the one

Be it the Long Way Down, Long Way Round or the Short Cut to the Shops, the BMW does it with ease

ANDY'S OPINION



What a beast. With the weather protection on this puppy, I'd put my money on riding through a waterfall and not getting wet. Its good, usable power easily outstrips the Yamaha. It's surely the biggest machine I've ridden, yet the gigantism is forgotten when aboard and easy inputs have the GS heading in whatever direction you ask. Capable of cornering at speed allows for fast flowing motion, although it's perhaps a little unstable tipping into slower turns. Not as comfy for me as the Ducati, and the big tank may prove a bitch to fill. A proper tool, not far from perfect.

Andy's verdict **9/10**

TECH DATA



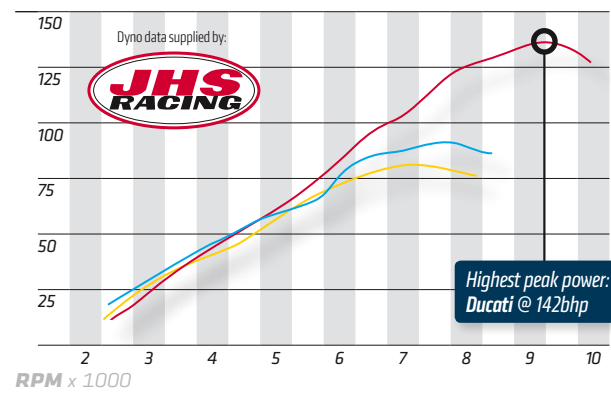
	Yamaha XT1200Z	Ducati Multistrada 1200 S	BMW R 1200 GS Adv'
ENGINE			
Type	1199cc, 8v, liquid-cooled, parallel twin	1198cc, L-twin 8v, liquid-cooled	1170cc, 8v, air/oil cooled Boxer twin
Bore x Stroke	98 x 79.5mm	106 x 67.9mm	101 x 73mm
Compression	11.0:1	11.3:1	12.0:1
Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection
Tested Power	91bhp @ 7,300rpm	142.3bhp @ 9,250rpm	100.3bhp @ 7,600rpm
Tested Torque	98Nm @ 6,000rpm	118Nm @ 7,500rpm	105Nm @ 6,000rpm
CHASSIS			
Frame	Steel tube backbone	Tubular steel trellis	Two section frame
Suspension	Non-adjustable fork	Öhlins 48mm fork, fully adj fork	Telelever, fully adj
R Suspension	Monoshock, adj preload & rebound	Öhlins electronic fully adj monoshock	Paralever, fully adj
Front Brakes	Four-piston calipers, 310mm discs, ABS	Four-piston calipers, 320mm discs, ABS	Four-piston calipers, 305mm discs, ABS
Rear Brakes	Twin piston caliper, 282mm disc, ABS	Twin-piston caliper, 245mm disc, ABS	Two-piston caliper, 265mm disc, ABS
DIMENSIONS			
Wheelbase	1540mm	1530mm	1507mm
Seat Height	845-870mm	850mm	890-910mm
Dry Weight	261kg	192kg	223kg
Fuel Capacity	23L	20L	33L
PRICE			
Price	£13,499 otr	£14,295 otr	£12,980 otr (as tested)
From	Yamaha UK 01932 358000 Yamaha-motor.co.uk	Ducati UK 08451 222 996 Ducatiuk.com	BMW Motorrad 0800 777155 BMW-motorrad.co.uk

With the pregnant heifer about to give birth, Andy gloved up and stepped in to help

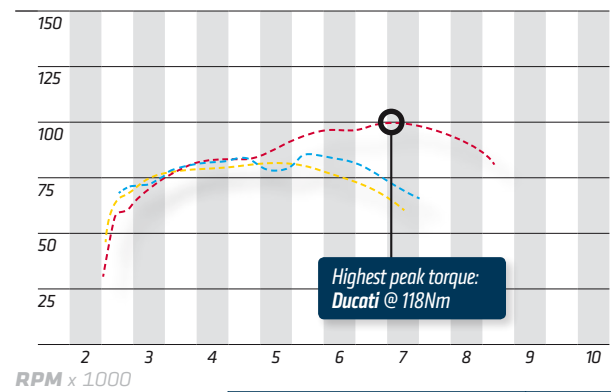


In this field, and many others, the BMW retains its 30 year dominance

POWER



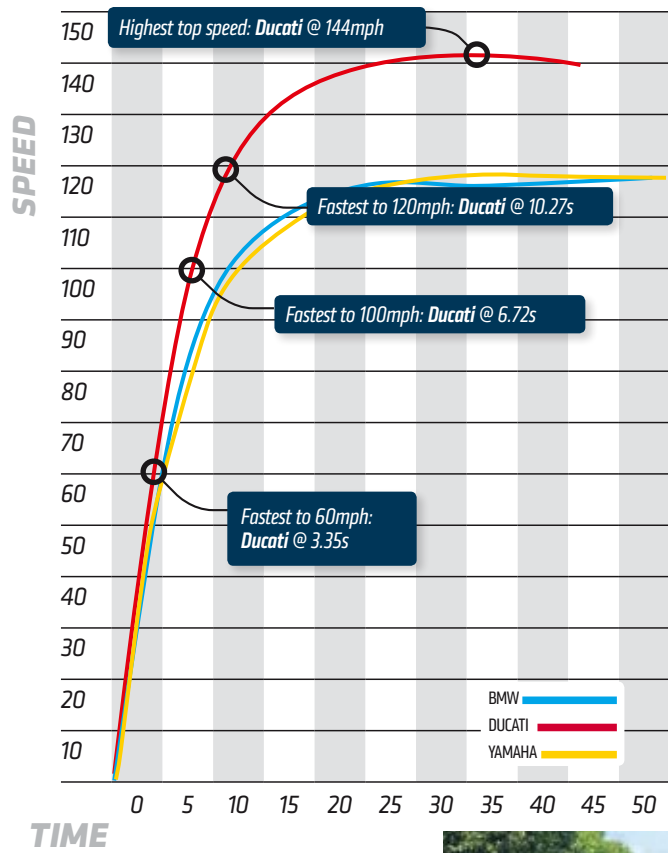
TORQUE



	Yamaha XT1200Z	Ducati Multistrada 1200 S	BMW R 1200 GS Adv'
SPEED			
0-60	4.12s	3.35s	3.97s
0-100	10.94s	6.72	10.20s
0-120	36.59s	10.27	24.14s
Stg 1/4 Mile	12.86 @ 104.97mph	11.29 @ 124.21mph	12.71 @ 107.69mph
Standing Mile	36.19 @ 119.63mph	30.82 @ 143.72mph	35.36 @ 120.30mph
Top Speed	122mph	144mph	121mph

SPEED DATA

SPEED TEST NOTES



26°C
Light

YAMAHA SUPER TÉNÉRÉ
Hmm, unless you're on ice the traction control is barely needed. It answers a problem the Yamaha isn't capable of even asking. You eventually hit a reasonable speed, beating the Beemer, but in the process it's about as exciting as a margarine sarnie. You've also probably gone through three gallons of fuel...

DUCATI MULTISTRADA
That's more like it. You have to concentrate to launch this one, because there's enough power to loop it if you switch off. 144mph proves it's a rocket tourer, too, but then what else do you expect when you prise a superbike engine in this class of heavy breathers? It's kind of like cheating, but who cares when you're doing nearly a ton fiddy! Addictively exhilarating.

BMW K 1200 GS
Turn the anti-wheelie aid off to prove the Beemer ain't always boring. It gets lethargic up top, but there's plenty to hide behind as you thrash it way harder than you expect to. All three bikes had the panniers on, so expect a few more mph with them off.



THE VERDICT

Hindsight might suggest that, no matter how far we chose to ride them, the outcome of our labours was always going to favour the incumbent El Presidente. Hindsight would be toying with your will to believe in change, though.

Yamaha's XT1200Z Super Ténéré had all the ingredients. It had all the expectation, and almost as much lineage to draw upon, too. Yamaha's desire to innovate has always defined its new bikes, and the Tén' appeared to have no shortage of features or functionality, technical innovation or physical prowess, which would have tipped us off to its ultimately underwhelming delivery.

No-one stepped off the Yamaha with that pained look of regret that they may never get to ride one again. No-one smiled that wry, knowing smile of the unflappable tester, impressed enough to want to giggle at the brilliance of it. No-one fought for the Super Ténéré's key when a free choice was offered.

So it's a shitter then? No, of course it isn't. But it is last in this test, because despite its agility, it's powerful anchors, and similar overall spec' to the Beemer, it just can't compete. Like many bikes, it'll impress in isolation, but you only have to ride the GS to fully appreciate how far the Yam' falls short.

The Ducati splits the pair in every

sense. Some of you may feel that this was an odd bike to include here, but Ducati are targeting GS buyers, and the entire world labelled the new Multistrada as the 'new GS beater'. Everything about it makes the comparison a logical one, and it's the 'Strada's strengths that push it away from the GS, not its intentions.

We loved the old Multistrada, and we love the new one, too. But far from forcing its way into the GS's niche and beating it at its own game, the Duke is still out there on a limb, not quite belonging in any camp. The frenetic focus of that motor sets it apart, as does the combination of classic trailie attitude, married to a sportsbike-esque chassis and rims.



After miles of motorways, the boys took to the corners with vim and vigor

GROUP TEST

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Google Maps



DATE	TIME	LOCATION
14-Jul	19.00	A - Cribbs Causeway, J17 M5
14-Jul	20.54	B - A30, Victoria Roche, Cornwall
14-Jul	22.03	C - Land's End, Cornwall
15-Jul	00.37	D - Exeter Services, M5
15-Jul	02.26	E - Strensham Services, Worcs.
15-Jul	04.30	F - Moto Services, Lancaster
15-Jul	06.27	G - S. Abington Services, M74
15-Jul	09.18	H - Carr Bridge Garage, PH23
15-Jul	13.42	I - John O'Groats, Scotland
15-Jul	15.27	J - Brora Garage, KW9
15-Jul	18.24	K - Perth Services, A9
15-Jul	21.15	L - Tebay Services, Cumbria
16-Jul	23.32	M - Hilton Park Services, M5
16-Jul	01.04	N - Cribbs Causeway, J17 M5
Distance	1,703.5 miles	
Journey time	30hrs 4mins	
Average speed	56.78mph	

Thanks to:

BRYN AND KATE AT DUNLOP FOR SORTING THE ROADSMARTS – RUBBER PAR EXCELLENCE. SCOTT AT BMW FOR ARRANGING THE GS TO SPEC', ALAN AT DUCATI FOR MAGICING THE PANNIER-SHOD MULTI' S, AND SIMON AT YAMAHA FOR THE SUPER TEN'. OH, AND THE WEATHERMEN FOR GETTING THE FORECAST SO FUCKING WRONG. BASTARDS.

► The chain drive, while attractively comfortable, is impractical in this application, as is the tank range, flimsy luggage, and lack of rugged crashability. It's nay cheap, either. It's a fabulous bike in many senses, assuming it answers your needs, but a GS-beater? No, not this time.

The BMW has survived a rare onslaught from two completely new pretenders, without having lifted its game beyond what BMW felt was necessary to continue its mild evolution. More telling still is that if you put the '09 GS in the test instead, the outcome would have been exactly the same.

Just as the Japanese manufacturers seem incapable of breathing soul into their creations – which the Europeans seem to imbue as second nature – so it seems that no other manufacturer has yet discovered the secret recipe that blends utterly unremarkable elements together with such poise and balance that the end result is an unshakable motorcycling hegemony. The GS has defined the genre it invented for 30 years and sits atop its class with such a margin of comfort that you'd have to proclaim it to be one of the most successful bikes ever built.

If you want a part of that, buy any one of these bikes. If you want all of it - buy the BMW. ☐

