

KTM 990 ADVENTURE

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THE 990 is as happy drifting through the surf as it is nipping to the shops

WHAT'S NEW TECHNICALLY

SQUEEZING the taller Testastretta engine into the Monster chassis caused only a mild headache for Ducati. A little jiggery-pokery with engine covers and mounts helped to shoehorn the motor into the frame so the front pot doesn't touch the front wheel.

To handle the extra power, the trellis frame has a strengthening bar running between the two sides and below the headstock pipe. The taller engine also means a complete airbox shape revision. Consequently the moulded plastic fuel tank has been tweaked to accommodate the new airbox and fuel capacity has dropped from 15 litres to 13.5 litres. We doubt that even the new 50mm throttle bodies and finer 12-hole injectors will eke out more than 40mpg.

The silencer box houses a

three-way catalytic converter and is very restrictive; for this reason the pipework of the downpipes and secondary collectors has been boosted to 45mm to help air flow.

Braking is courtesy of Brembo's new monobloc series calipers. The four pistons of each front caliper squeeze the Brembo pads very effectively - Ducati claim around 45% more efficiency than the older S4R. This is attributed to the virtually flex-free bridge design of the radially-mounted caliper bodies and 19mm master cylinder.

As for weight loss, the Ohlins rear shock is half a kilo lighter than the S4R's, and, because of carbon fibre panels (exhaust shields, side panels etc), the S4RS comes in at over 4kg lighter than its predecessor.

THE 999 Testastretta superbike engine has been transplanted into the Monster S4RS



RACE KIT OFFERS 148BHP!

TOUGHER emissions regulations have all but stifled Ducati's legendary booming exhaust and airbox note. But help is at hand to restore sanity with Ducati's track-only (who are they it trying to kid?) hop-up kit.

Consisting of a Termignoni big-bore full race exhaust, free-flow air filter and uprated ECU module, the noise vented to air is rated as a 9.5 on the orgasm scale.

But there's more to this kit than just noise, looks and lust - another 18bhp more to boost output to a claimed 148bhp. While it's only a claimed figure, you definitely feel the extra kick in the pants...

The drive out of the turns comes with such force that the standard bike is left three seconds a lap behind - impressive stuff. This is also very important as the S4RS will be Ducati's new weapon against Aprilia's 1000 Tuono in the European naked twins race series.

The S4RS's Testastretta engine is from Ducati's 999 range which means that there's an awful lot of tuning goodies available if you've got the budget. The best Monster ever could get even better with a slipper clutch, high compression pistons, racing camshafts... and the list goes on.



RACE kit's Termignoni exhaust gives 18bhp extra, more ground clearance and a sweet note

The BEST way round

Bigger-bore KTM aims to steal R1200GS's thunder as best adventure tourer

KTM's 990 Adventure is a direct challenge to BMW's R1200GS and Buell's Ulysses - machines described as adventure sports bikes as they incorporate road manners with healthy off-road ability. As the old 950 Adventure proved its worth as a tourer, KTM's latest offering may also offer a serious alternative to bikes ranging from Honda's VFR800 to BMW's R1200RT.

WHAT'S NEW?

THE main difference is the engine, which is now 999cc rather than 950cc. The engine is from KTM's SuperDuke naked sports bike and is modified for the Adventure so peak power is just below 100bhp but torque has been boosted at low revs. The 950's carburetors have been replaced with fuel injection and anti-lock brakes are now standard (except on the off-road-biased S model), but can easily be turned off.

ON THE ROAD

IT'S a tall seat at 860mm but it isn't as daunting as you might think - I'm only 5'6" and felt at ease even when stationary as the low weight distribution means the bike is well-balanced. The heady torque of the LC8 engine gives useable power from as little as 2000rpm leading to front wheel lifts in the first two gears. There's also really no need to rev the bike to its 9500rpm redline; short-shifting will put your speed on the wrong side of the law in a few relaxed seconds and an indicated 135mph top whack is easily reached.

At 87mph the motor is barely working - a fuss-free 5000rpm. The upright fairing and hand guards guarantee all-day comfort, just like the seat. A 22-litre fuel capacity keeps the fuel stops to a minimum.

Considering its generous dimensions, the 990 is mightily stable even when flat out into a

headwind. Sweeping corners can be taken with vigour, but feel weird as the bike's height exaggerates the lean angle.

Pirelli's wide-treaded Scorpion tyres offer massive amounts of confidence.

The suspension is on the soft side, but can easily be firmed up by the adjusters. The Brembo brakes are perfect. Pulsing through the lever is the only real giveaway that the ABS is in action.

The fuel injection is faultless; the motor occasionally surges at slow speed with low rpm, but this is more down to a characteristic of the V-twin's massive torque.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK ATTACKING loose gravel and a beach section with my limited off-road skill was far better than I expected. OK, the bike is on the heavy side and when you roll off the throttle you can feel the front wanting to tuck on tight corners.

Experienced riders may prefer not to use the ABS as it can compromise fine braking control on loose ground. This hit home when braking for a tight hairpin on shale - the ABS wouldn't let the bike slow enough and I missed my turn completely.

FOR THE COMMITTED...

GEARED for serious off-road action, there is also an 'S' version with increased ground clearance, more generous suspension travel and the seat is narrower and less comfy. ABS is not an option. I struggled with the tall seat and didn't feel 100% confident - but I'm sure the S will be the choice of trail-busters all over the globe.

VERDICT

THE 950 Adventure was already an amazing go-anywhere bike, mixing real off-road ability with great competence on the tar. The 990 engine's extra poke and flexibility just makes it better still.



ALMOST 100bhp is provided by the SuperDuke motor

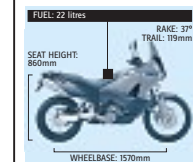


BREMBO ABS brakes are very confidence-inspiring

KTM 990 ADVENTURE

★★★★★
COST: £8695
POWER: (claimed) 96.5bhp
WEIGHT: (claimed) 199kg
TORQUE: (claimed) 70.1ftlb

Availability: End of February
Colours: Orange or black (S-model in blue only)
New for 2006: New model
Insurance group: 13 (of 17)
Info: KTM UK - 01280-709500



TECHNICAL SPEC
Engine: Liquid-cooled 999cc (101 x 62.4mm) 8v dotc four-stroke V-twin. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Tubular steel trellis frame. WP 48mm inverted forks, fully adjustable. WP single rear shock, fully-adjustable with remote pre-load. Brakes: 2 x 300mm front discs with Brembo twin-piston calipers. 240mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. ABS (not S-model). Tyres: 90/90 x 21 front, 150/70 x 18 rear.

'S' VERSION is even more biased to off-roading

