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**Ninja 1100 SX** — The Swiss Army Knife of Sport-Tourers

**IS IT A SUPERBIKE OR A SCOOTER**  
**Italjet Dragster 700 Twin**

**THE TERRIFYING LAST MINUTES OF WILLIAM DUNLOP**

**Inside the Final Ride of a Road Racing Legend**

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# The Editor's Desk

## December 2025 Edition



# Editor's Welcome:

## SUMMER EDITION



Ian, Editor

As we close out an incredible 2025, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our advertisers, supporters, contributors, and every rider who has been part of the LHR family this year. Your commitment, passion, and belief in what we're building have kept this magazine moving forward at full throttle. We appreciate every message, every shared post, every event invite, and every kilometre ridden in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood.

With the weather warming up and summer settling in, it's the perfect season to get out on the open road. Whether you're carving through the passes, hitting the coast, or joining weekend breakfast runs, we hope the sunshine brings you more reasons to ride, explore, and connect with your fellow bikers.

And now for the big news: **LHR Bike Magazine is officially going to print in 2026!**

This has been a long-awaited milestone, and we couldn't have reached it without your support. To make sure you don't miss out on our first print issues—packed with premium features, rider stories, tests, events, and more—be sure to subscribe and secure your copy.

From all of us at LHR, thank you for being part of this growing community and for sharing your love of motorcycles with us.

**Wishing you and yours a safe, joyful, and unforgettable holiday season.**

Ride well, ride proud, and see you on the road in 2026!



### "The Magazine We Needed"

From: Mark S. – Durban

I just want to say thank you for an authentic South African biking magazine. LHR feels like it's written by real riders for real riders. The stories on women in motorcycling have opened my eyes to how much talent we have in SA. Keep it up—can't wait for the printed version in 2026!

### "Any Chance for More Adventure Bike Content?"

From: Chantel V. – George

I love the magazine, but I'd like to see more content on adventure riding—especially local routes in the Garden Route, Karoo, and Eastern Cape. Many of us are always searching for new gravel passes and weekend escapes. Please keep the reviews coming!

### "Breakfast Runs & Brothers"

From: Ruan "Wolf" P. – Pretoria

Your recent piece on brotherhood in bike clubs hit home. It's something a lot of us talk about but few address openly. Thanks for saying what many riders feel. Maybe in future you can feature clubs that are doing things right and building real unity in their communities.

### "Can You Feature More Budget Gear?"

From: Anelisa T. – Port Elizabeth

Not everyone can afford top-end kit, so your article on budget riding gear was brilliant. I'd love to see more comparisons like this—gloves, boots, jackets, even helmets. It helps new riders so much.

### "LHR Has Brought Back the Vibe"

From: Samson K. – Johannesburg South

Just wanted to give a shout-out to

the team. Our club looks forward to every issue because you highlight local riders and events. Too many magazines ignore the grassroots scene. Thank you for putting SA bikers front and centre again.

### "Old Schools Forever"

From: Jakes – Bloemfontein

Loved the story on retro bikes and the classic BMW G/S. Please do more on old-school machines and the riders who still maintain them. Some of us live for carburetors, spanners, and early morning misfires!

### "See You at the 2026 Print Launch!"

From: Nadine R. – Cape Town

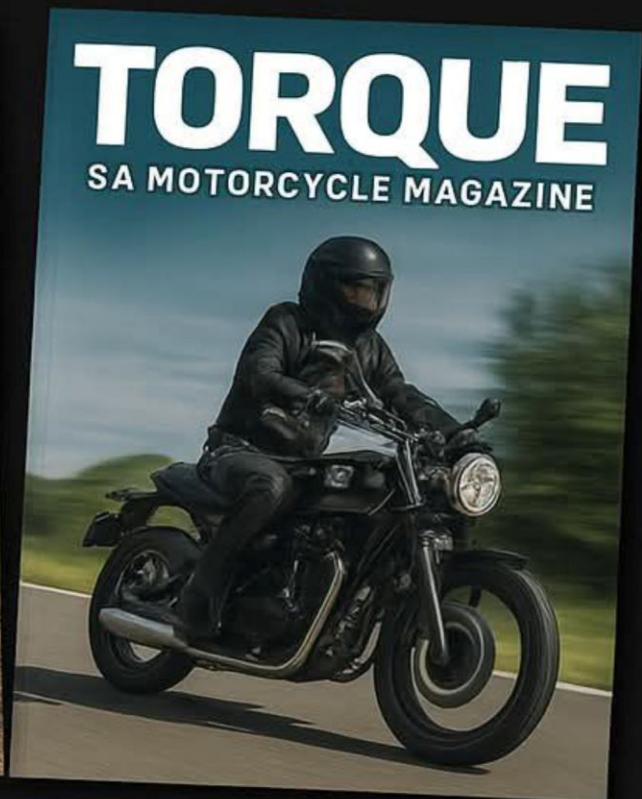
I'm so excited that the magazine is going to print next year. Digital is great, but nothing beats flipping through real pages with a cup of coffee after a Sunday ride. Please let us know when subscriptions open—I want to be one of the first!





# **SALES AGENT WANTED!**

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## NORTON'S MANX RETURNS

The first of six fresh machines emerging from the reborn marque, the Manx R is a full-force contender entering the fistfight that defines today's ferocious, open-capacity street segment. Loaded with top-tier components and tech, the Manx R rises above the rest through crisp lines, zero gimmicks, and instead delivers pure elegance with a subtle hint of the potential waiting once you swing a leg over the remarkable creation. No wings, aero blades or race-team graphics—this uncluttered Manx R tips its hat to the icons of old who forged their status through performance alone.

At its heart lies a fresh 72-degree V4 displacing 1200cc of serious punch, the core of this new British superbike. Finished with carbon bodywork and rims, Brembo's new Hypure stoppers, a single-sided swingarm and cutting-edge electronics, it is a standout machine from any vantage point.

Instead of crafting a WSBK-style lookalike, the engineers leaned toward events like the IOMTT for inspiration on fit, endurance, and a deeply rider-focused interpretation of what bikers want but rarely receive.


Even without flashy aero kit, the Norton Manx R radiates authority. The firm, confident demeanour of its celebrated predecessor remains firmly woven into its core.

Local pricing has not been revealed – and it will surely command a premium tag for a premium

motorcycle, yet beyond that, isn't it simply beautiful?

Backing its aesthetics is 206hp at a practical and genuine 11,500rpm plus 130Nm of thrust at a very usable 9000rpm. The tune reflects data taken from real riders to determine what is truly beneficial on the road, not merely on paper. Naturally, a bi-directional quickshifter is fitted, along with five modes you can tailor to refine your Manx R to taste.

Marzocchi's controlled active suspension is ultra-modern and adjusts the fully tunable units in real time to suit terrain and riding needs. Regarding connectivity, it is always working alongside you, setting preferences for each ride, and you're able to view or analyse every moment – even replay it via a synced GoPro if you choose.

Hill-aware, lean-aware, it handles everything. It even provides ideal shift indicators. Dynamic brake lights, multimedia support, remote immobilisation and anti-theft alerts—this new Norton Manx R elevates intuition and connectivity to an entirely new tier. So, are you ready? 

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be aware, show you care



# TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE TREAT



The enticing Street Moto2 is still several months off, as is confirmed pricing, but the deliciously spec'd Street Triple 765 RX can be bought today...

Built for the most dedicated Street Triple enthusiasts, the latest RX adopts a fiercer riding stance, and both models benefit from some superb new components. The Moto2 edition, once launched, will be sold strictly on a first-come basis to avoid any let-downs, with only 1000 units worldwide. It's a once-only release. Each embraces the sport/ track attitude with real intent...



## TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE TEMPTATION

The striking Street Triple 765 RX also features Öhlins NIX30 forks up front and lowered clip-on bars visible from above its RX laser-marked top yoke. A model-specific RX-labelled seat encourages your body to move naturally with the athletic ergonomics.

The aluminium-finish trim and vivid Diablo red subframe sharpen your overall presence, perfectly matching your new Triumph Street Triple 765 RX. Look sharp – act fast. 🏍️





# HONDA'S TOUR-BLADE?



Honda has unleashed its big four into the sport-touring arena, and it has certainly made a statement. Built around the latest Hornet platform, which itself uses a reworked Fireblade power plant, the new CB1000GT rolls out ready with an exceptional suite of touring equipment.

The engine's character is pure Hornet output, only delivered with added smoothness, plus Showa's Electronically Equipped Ride Adjustment, or EERA for short, six-axis management for lean-aware intervention should it ever be needed, heated grips, a five-position adjustable screen, two-way quickshifter, hand guards, panniers, self-cancelling indicators.

A centre stand, Honda Smart Key ignition, full connectivity with navigation, ESS (emergency stop signalling during heavy braking) and that motor... Honda's latest high-flyer has touched down.

With scope to fine-tune the suspension, the engine and electronic responses to match your preferences, the TFT display lets you tailor the ride effortlessly and clearly, both day and night.

If you favour classic gauges while enjoying classic tunes, the new CB1000GT has you

covered – it can mimic that feel as well. Three different dash layouts are selectable to suit your mindset.

**Go on – ask your Honda dealer how surprisingly little this fresh sport-tourer** 







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# SUPERCROSS FINALE COMES TO CAPE TOWN

Cape Town Is The First African City  
To Host The World Finale Race





# ***THE BUILD-UP TO THE 2025 WORLD SUPERCROSS CHAMPIONSHIPS***

## **Cape Town Prepares for the Biggest Stadium MX Showdown on African Soil**

### **A CITY, A STADIUM & A WORLD STAGE**

Cape Town becomes the epicenter of world-class dirt, thunder, and theatrics as the World Supercross Championship lands on African soil for the first time.

The iconic Cape Town Stadium will host the most explosive night of Supercross racing seen outside the USA.

*“Cape Town wasn’t chosen for convenience — it was chosen for impact.”*

### **A SEASON OF RIVALRIES**

The 2025 season promises one of the tightest title fights in WSX history.

Returning champions and breakout rookies collide in a year packed with unpredictable results.

- **Ken Roczen** surges forward after a dominant 2024.
- **Joey Savatgy** remains WSX’s proven wild card.

SX2 newcomers from Europe and the US bring fresh heat.

### **CAPE TOWN’S NEW SUPERCROSS ERA**

South Africa has a rich motocross history, but nothing on this scale has ever been attempted. The stadium build is a collaboration between international WSX infrastructure crews and elite South African track specialists.

#### **Expect:**

- A full-spec American-style track, complete with massive triples, deep sand, technical rhythms, and signature whoop lanes.
- Imported dirt compounds engineered to hold shape in Cape Town’s coastal humidity.
- Global-grade production: lasers, pyro, LED walls, drone cameras, and live broadcast rigs.

*“This is not a demonstration event — this is a world championship.”*







## THE FANS — AFRICA SHOWS UP

Tickets are projected to sell out within days. South Africa's off-road culture is deeply rooted — from the Western Cape's MX loops to the Highveld's enduro trails — and fans across Southern Africa are already planning group rides and road-trip convoys.

Economists expect the event to inject over R180 million into the Western Cape economy, as international teams, sponsors, media, and thousands of travelling fans fill hotels, restaurants, and coastal hotspots.

## THE TEAMS ARRIVE — FACTORY FIREPOWER

Cape Town will transform into a high-octane paddock zone in early December. Factory rigs from Honda, Yamaha, Kawasaki, GasGas, and KTM will park up along the stadium edges as mechanics, suspension techs, tyre crews, and data engineers get to work.

Temporary practice tracks around the Western Cape will host daily testing sessions, giving fans a chance to see their heroes in the wild.

## THE TRACK — DESIGNED FOR DRAMA

The 2025 Cape Town track layout is engineered with one intention: bar-to-bar racing.

Key features include:

- A dual-lane rhythm section that splits riders before reconnecting — perfect for overtakes.
- A long, fast straight into a massive triple right in front of the main grandstand.
- A nod to African terrain with an elevated sand section.
- A close-proximity finish-line jump positioned tighter to fans than any previous WSX round.

**"If a rider wins the title here, they will have earned every single point."**

## WHY THIS ROUND MATTERS

This event marks a milestone for African motorsport. Cape Town joins Abu Dhabi, Vancouver, Birmingham, and Melbourne on a championship calendar that is rapidly expanding its global footprint. For young African riders, this is a doorway to international opportunity.

Several teams and sponsors have hinted at future development camps, wildcard selections, and mentorship programmes — all seeded by bringing WSX to Africa.

## FINAL BUILD-UP — THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS

The final weeks before race day will be electric:

- Official press day at the stadium
- Media rider track walk
- Fan Fest along the Green Point Fan Walk
- Rider signings at the V&A Waterfront
- Fireworks and lighting test nights over the stadium bowl

When the floodlights heat up and 22 riders snap off the gate beneath Table Mountain's shadow, Cape Town will witness a global motorsport milestone.

The 2025 World Supercross Championship finale isn't just another international event — it's a declaration that Africa is ready for the world stage.

**The dirt is being shipped, the stadium is being prepped, and the world is watching. 🏍️**





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## From the archive

The B-King (B for “Boost,” not a fast-food chain)

# 2007 SUZUKI B-KING:

## A Tale of Over-Promise and Under-Delivery

Concept bikes rarely make it to production, and Simon Hargreaves reflects on a time when Suzuki over-promised and under-delivered. Somewhere in Suzuki’s Hamamatsu factory sits a collection of forgotten concept bikes, gathering dust.

There’s a 1985 hub-centre-steered Falcorustyco, a 2005 inline-six Stratosphere in the corner, and a 2013 turbocharged Recursion parallel twin near the door. None of these saw production, as most concepts are more about design and engineering exercises than actual bikes for the street. Even when a concept bike runs, it’s usually just a feasibility test. Motorcycles don’t start from wish-lists of wild specs and futuristic designs—they’re built around practical concerns: Can we make it using existing production methods? What would it cost to replace clocks with holograms?

### How do we pass construction and use regulations with foot-long axle scythes?

However, in October 2001, Suzuki threw caution to the wind with the B-King, a naked muscle bike concept at the Tokyo Motor Show. The chassis was conventional, but its aggressive styling, featuring large conical underseat exhausts, turned heads. Under the skin, it featured the supercharged Hayabusa engine, delivering 175bhp in its normal form, with the promise of 240bhp once boosted. The B-King (B for “Boost,” not a fast-food chain) appeared at more shows, with Suzuki collecting feedback.

The public loved the idea, mainly because of the supercharger. Then, Suzuki went quiet. The B-King seemed destined for the same fate as other forgotten concepts. But in late 2006, a production version was revealed at the Paris Show, with a delayed UK release in August



Original 2001 concept, complete with blower





B-King goes  
spar-king at  
Anglesey in  
August 2007



2007 at Anglesey Circuit. Suzuki explained the long development time as the challenge of delivering the promised bike, but conveniently left out the key feature that initially sold the B-King: the supercharger. Instead, Suzuki argued—convincingly—that 165bhp at the wheel and more than 80lb·ft of torque from 3000rpm to 10,500rpm was a worthy substitute. And while it lacked forced induction, the B-King was undeniably fun on the track, laying down black lines, scraping homemade titanium hero blobs, and threatening to highside out of every turn.

It was also surprisingly practical. The bike was comfortable, offered decent wind protection, and handled well. However, the public, disappointed by the absence of the supercharger and perhaps embarrassed by their earlier enthusiasm, turned their backs on the B-King. It flopped and was discontinued after just four years—two fewer than the time it took to develop. Which, in itself, is an interesting concept. 🏍️



# Tech

Because  
motorcycle  
engineering is  
beautiful

# *LESS IS MORE OR MORE FOR LESS*

## LIGHTLY STROKED

To turn the Ninja 1000SX into an 1100, Kawasaki increased the pistons' stroke (the distance travelled up or down the cylinder) from 56mm to 59mm. Capacity increased 5.3 per cent – yet power fell by 4.3 per cent

'Horsepower per  
litre has actually  
fallen by 9%





The engine in Kawasaki's Ninja 1100SX (p40) raises an interesting question. On the surface, its evolution from the 1000SX seems less than impressive. A 3mm increase in stroke and a 5.4% boost in capacity result in a 6bhp loss, which doesn't seem to add up, even though the new model produces more torque—always a good thing for everyday riding. This could be seen as a case of “more is less,” something marketers are reluctant to emphasize.

Yet, the Ninja 1100SX's exceptional ride quality reveals an important lesson about product development: it's not always about the numbers. However, there is one critical exception, which likely explains Kawasaki's decision to make these changes.

Balancing attributes like power, torque, and

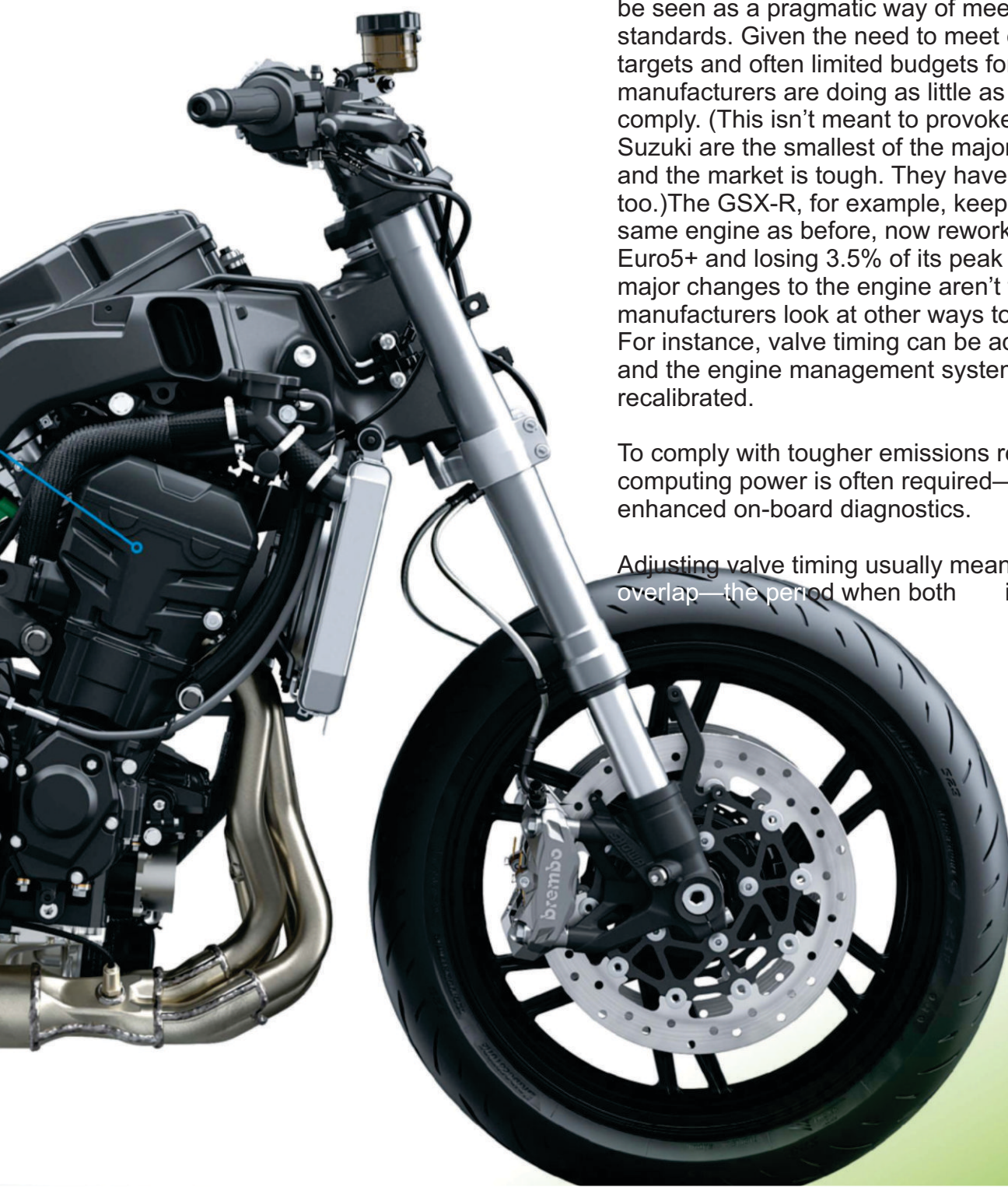
weight in a motorcycle is a complex task, but one thing is non-negotiable in automotive engineering: no vehicle can be sold unless it meets the prevailing emissions regulations. These are the numbers that cannot be ignored.

The Ninja 1100SX is 6bhp down compared to last year's 1000, and Jamie explains why...When new emissions legislation is introduced, manufacturers must allocate engineering resources to meet these standards—whether they like it or not. If other aspects of the bike need to be compromised to achieve compliance, so be it.

With Euro5+ regulations arriving, some bikes have been launched with lower specific outputs (bhp/cc) than their predecessors. This is true for the Kawasaki, which now has a larger engine but less power, and the Suzuki GSX-R1000R, which lost 7bhp compared to its 2017 version (down from 199bhp to 192bhp). This can be seen as a pragmatic way of meeting emissions standards. Given the need to meet clean emissions targets and often limited budgets for development, manufacturers are doing as little as possible to comply. (This isn't meant to provoke; Kawasaki and Suzuki are the smallest of the major Japanese brands, and the market is tough. They have to make money too.) The GSX-R, for example, keeps much of the same engine as before, now reworked to comply with Euro5+ and losing 3.5% of its peak power. When major changes to the engine aren't feasible, manufacturers look at other ways to meet regulations. For instance, valve timing can be adjusted fairly easily, and the engine management system can be recalibrated.

To comply with tougher emissions regulations, more computing power is often required—Euro5+ mandates enhanced on-board diagnostics.

Adjusting valve timing usually means reducing overlap—the period when both intake and exhaust



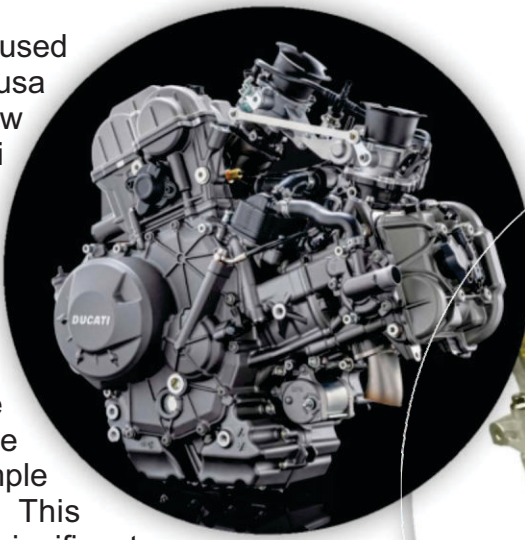


A similar strategy of reducing overlap was used when Suzuki recently revived their Hayabusa and DR-Z4 engines, both of which also saw a reduction in power. Additionally, Suzuki has increased the compression ratio, likely requiring changes to the pistons. But you might ask, the GSX-R has variable valve timing (VVT), so why didn't they just adjust that to offset the power loss?

While VVT could indeed help mitigate the compromise, the centrifugal phaser on the GSX-R1000R's intake cam, though simple and elegant, lacks electronic control. This means it cannot be relied upon to make significant changes. Beyond that, modifications outside the core engine are typically easier and cheaper. For instance, intake runners can have their diameter or length altered, the exhaust system can be modified, and the catalyst loading can be adjusted—sometimes increasing precious metal content to improve emissions while minimizing changes to the rest of the engine.

As you can see, it's all about finding the right trade-offs. Once you move beyond the basics, the next steps involve more expensive modifications. First, you might change the injectors and recalibrate targeting, which could be done with an ECU update. Then, the intake port geometry can be adjusted to improve in-cylinder air motion and combustion. After that, changes to the combustion chamber, which require modifications to the cylinder head (one of the most costly parts), would come next. The further down the list you go, the more durability testing and revalidation is needed. It all adds up quickly. This is where the bean counters step in.

They start questioning whether it's worth pushing to hold power outputs if it's going to cost significantly more. This is especially true when those outputs far exceed what most riders can realistically use without relying on advanced electronic rider



aids. Kawasaki's approach has been to invest a bit more to maintain power close to the original figure, but their horsepower-per-litre has dropped by 9%—a much larger reduction than Suzuki's. Increasing the stroke by 3mm increases the engine capacity from the 1000SX's 1043cc to 1099cc.

However, some of the most expensive parts, like the crankshaft and cylinder block, would have needed to be modified to accommodate this. The cylinder head sits 3.3mm higher, indicating changes to the block deck height. This dimension is interesting: while the stroke change would only require a 1.5mm increase, the extra 1.8mm could be aimed at maintaining the same compression ratio. They also mention changes to the ports, suggesting further modifications to the head. Overall, it seems like a practical set of updates, and given the significant reduction in specific power, it's likely that improving torque delivery was a priority—although in absolute terms, torque has only increased by 2Nm (about 1.5lb·ft), far less than the capacity change. Meanwhile, the Suzuki's maximum torque has actually decreased.

Now, let's compare Kawasaki and Suzuki to other manufacturers. BMW, for instance, has increased the power of the S1000RR to 207bhp while improving emissions. They likely justified the added cost because they need to maintain a competitive edge, both for marketing and racing homologation. The S1000RR also benefits from ShiftCam, which allows two intake cam profiles to optimize both emissions at low loads and power at high loads. The S1000RR now starts at £17,990, so it will be interesting to see where the new GSX-R's price lands in comparison.

Ducati, on the other hand, has developed a new V2 engine to replace the Superquadro, likely influenced





**New GSX-R1000R:  
more wings; less  
bhp and torque**

**BACK ONCE AGAIN**

Suzuki's GSX-R1000R is returning to Europe, which is brilliant news – but it is 7bhp down on when we last met it. Reduced valve overlap is the culprit.



*One could argue that the GSX-R takes a practical approach to meeting emissions regulations.*

by Euro5+. Its electronically controlled VVT system (unlike Suzuki's) is an advantage, but it's still unclear whether Euro5+ has cost the Panigale V2 around 30bhp. Ducati also makes a 213bhp V4 that meets Euro5+, proving their capability in fixed valve timing engines. In the end, it's all about budget and target market. Some bikes have long passed the point where "too much is never enough." Objectively, few riders will be disappointed with the power of the updated Japanese bikes. I'm just glad that engineers continue to develop combustion engines, and that consumers are still keen to embrace them. Modern systems have made engines much cleaner, and while emissions limits are tightening, there's still life in the old dog yet.







YAMAHA R3    LIGHTWEIGHT PRECISION: THE  
LITTLE BIKE THAT GREW UP



Since its debut, the Yamaha R3 has quietly become one of the most recognizable and sensible entries in the lightweight sportbike segment. It's not the flashiest or most expensive machine in the showroom, but it's exactly the sort of bike riders reach for when they want razor-sharp handling, manageable power, everyday usability and a sporty chassis that still forgives the occasional mistake. For riders who want the look and feel of a full-blown sportbike without the intimidation (or insurance bill) of a 600-plus machine, the R3 has been a steady favorite — a gateway to faster bikes and a legitimate tool for real-world riding and track days alike.

### A clear purpose

Yamaha pitched the R3 to do three things at once: be accessible for new riders, entertaining for experienced riders, and practical enough for daily use. To pull that off the R3 keeps weight low, ergonomics moderately sporty but not extreme, and the engine character smooth and predictable.

The result is a motorcycle that feels like it was designed with an honest list of use cases in mind — commuting, weekend canyon carving, skills building and low-cost track practice — rather than a spec sheet built to impress journalists.

### Engine and performance — lively, not savage

At the heart of the R3 is a small-capacity parallel-twin that's been tuned for midrange punch and an eager top end. Displacing in the low-300cc range, the twin revs cleanly and responds to throttle inputs with linear, confidence-inspiring power. That translates to friendly city manners — light clutch, usable torque at low RPM, and enough grunt to easily overtake in traffic — while still rewarding higher revs on open roads.

The numbers are modest compared to larger sportbikes, but they're perfectly matched to the R3's chassis and purpose. In real riding, that means brisk acceleration that surprises riders coming from 125–250 class bikes and a redline







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that invites short, playful bursts on the straights. It's not a bike built for drag-strip domination, but it will hustle on a twisty road and make a good student's track test bike because it teaches correct lines and corner speed without masking mistakes.

Chassis, handling and brakes — precision scaled down

Where the R3 often steals the show is in how it handles. Yamaha has always been good at delivering nimble chassis geometry and a suspension setup that feels lively without being twitchy. The frame is light and stiff in the places that matter, and the suspension — typically conventional forks up front and a preload-adjustable rear shock — balances comfort and control. For a sportbike in this class, turn-in is sharp, flickability is excellent, and the bike stays composed under braking.

Braking hardware is competent and, with modern ABS available on many models, confidence in emergency situations is high. The R3's brakes are not huge stoppers like those on litre bikes, but they're proportionate, progressive and easy to modulate — perfect for learning threshold braking and trail braking techniques.

### Ergonomics and everyday usability

Unlike supersport bikes that force the rider into an aggressive tuck, the R3's ergonomics are sport-oriented but sustainable. The pegs and handlebars place the rider in a position that encourages spirited riding while keeping longer rides comfortable. That compromise makes the R3 a realistic option for commuting, short touring and weekend adventures where comfort over distance matters.

The small fairing and windscreen provide enough protection to make highway riding tolerable for smaller riders; taller riders may feel windblast at higher speeds, but this is to be expected in a bike of this class. Storage is obviously limited, but the practicality equation is helped by low operating costs, easy parking and the ability to slip through congested urban traffic.

### Styling and identity

Yamaha gives the R3 sportbike DNA: aggressive lines, twin headlights, sculpted tank and a high tail. Over the years the styling has evolved,



borrowing cues from its bigger R-series siblings to present a cohesive family look. This is more than cosmetic: the fairing design aids aerodynamic stability, and the bike's compact dimensions enhance its visual and physical agility. For many buyers, the R3 provides the emotional appeal of a supersport without the penalties of owning one.

#### Who the R3 is for

**Beginners:** The R3 is a top pick for new riders who want a real motorcycle that won't outgrow them the moment they leave training. It helps new riders learn gear selection, cornering speeds and throttle control on a platform that won't punish minor errors. Insurance premiums are usually reasonable, and its approachable nature helps develop confidence fast.

**Experienced riders:** For more seasoned riders the R3 is a compact, fun weapon for canyon runs and learning advanced techniques. It's also often used as a daily ride or a commuter that doesn't sacrifice enjoyment. Experienced riders appreciate the R3's ability to be pushed close to its limits, teaching smoothness and precision.

**Track day enthusiasts:** The R3 is ideal for club racing and novice track days. Its predictable chassis, weight distribution and manageable power encourage students to focus on lines and braking rather than being overwhelmed by torque. In racing classes restricted by displacement, the R3 is often a competitive choice.

#### Customization and aftermarket life

One of the R3's charms is how easy and affordable it is to personalise. The aftermarket scene supports a long list of bolt-on upgrades: exhausts that both improve

sound and reduce weight, slipper clutches, shorty levers, upgraded brake lines and pads for sharper stopping, and suspension upgrades to extract more performance on the track. Cosmetic mods — tail tidies, aftermarket windscreens and graphics kits — let owners make the R3 feel more unique without breaking the bank.

#### Maintenance and ownership costs

Part of the R3's appeal lies in sensible ownership costs. Routine maintenance is straightforward: relatively simple engine architecture, common replacement parts and good fuel efficiency keep day-to-day costs down. Tyres for lightweight sportbikes are inexpensive and last reasonably long when the bike is used as a commuter. The small engine means less weight to lug around and lower fuel consumption compared with larger sportbikes, making the R3 friendly on wallets over time.

#### How it compares

Compared to 600cc middleweights, the R3 is much lighter, more forgiving and less expensive to insure and maintain. Against smaller 250–300 singles, the R3's parallel-twin often offers smoother power delivery and a bit more high-speed stability. What the R3 trades away is outright top-end power and the raw sound and vibration of bigger bikes — but most owners view that as a fair compromise for the handling balance and daily practicality the R3 provides.

#### Common criticisms

No bike is perfect, and the R3 has a few typical critiques. Some riders wish for a little more low-end torque — something that's often corrected by aftermarket tuning. Others want more robust suspension out of the box for heavy track use, though upgraded damping typically fixes that. Taller riders sometimes report limited long-distance comfort, due to compact ergonomics—again, adjustable bars and aftermarket seats can improve the touring







credentials.

### The R3 in real life — stories from owners

A common refrain from owners: the R3 makes you a better rider. Because the machine doesn't have the brute force to cover mistakes, it forces riders to carry corner speed and pick better lines. New riders often describe a confidence shift within months: the same roads that felt challenging become playgrounds for skill-building. Experienced riders frequently confess to keeping their R3 as a second bike precisely because it rewards smoothness and finesse.

### Why it matters

The R3 is important not because it's the most powerful or the most technologically advanced bike on the showroom floor, but because it occupies a crucial niche. It's the motorcycle that introduces riders to sportbike dynamics in a manageable envelope. It's the machine that encourages riders to refine technique before stepping up to heavier, faster bikes. And it's the fun, usable tool that makes everyday riding a pleasure rather than a chore.

### Buying advice

If you're considering an R3, inspect for regular maintenance, service history and riding style of

the previous owner (if buying used). A well-maintained R3 with upgraded tyres and fresh fluids will reward the next owner with years of reliable performance. For new buyers, choose a color and spec that suits your riding — options like ABS and cosmetic packs add safety and style without drastically altering the bike's character. Don't be afraid to test-ride: the lightweight feel and quick turn-in are part of the package and usually confirm whether it's the right fit.

### Final verdict

The Yamaha R3 remains a compelling answer for riders who want genuine sportbike DNA without the intimidation factor of larger machines. It teaches, it thrills and it's practical. Whether you're a beginner laying the foundations of good technique, an experienced rider wanting a playful commuter, or a track day regular needing a forgiving platform to hone skills, the R3 makes a persuasive case. It's a reminder that motorcycling isn't just about top speed — it's about balance, feel and the simple joy of leaning a well-sorted machine through a perfect corner. The R3 delivers all of that in a tidy, efficient package — small in displacement but big on character. 🏍️

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# DUCATI PANIGAL





# ALE





There are superbikes, and then there's the Ducati Panigale V4 — a motorcycle that arrived with the unapologetic intent of marrying MotoGP thinking with road-legal brutality. Where Ducati's earlier superbikes carried the V-twin's character like a badge of identity, the Panigale V4 marked a dramatic pivot: a 90° V4 engine, a racing-first electronics stack and a razor-sharp chassis distilled into a street-legal weapon. The result is not merely faster numbers on paper — it's a motorcycle that changes what you expect from a liter-plus superbike on clear tarmac. Ducati's V4 story began as an answer to its own racing ambitions: bring the Desmosedici 'attitude' to the road, but keep the manners. The Panigale V4 achieves that uneasy balance — it can be a smooth, tractable mountain-road companion or an uncompromising lap-time machine, depending on the flick of a switch and the rider's nerve.



### Engine & Performance (tech-at-a-glance)

At its heart sits the 1,103 cc Desmosedici Stradale: a 90° V4 with a counter-rotating crank that revs eagerly and carries a distinctly racing-derived design. Depending on market and model-year mapping, peak power for the standard Panigale V4 is around 209–216 hp, with torque figures in the 120 Nm region — numbers that place the V4 firmly in hyperbike territory while delivering a surprisingly usable powerband when left in the softer ride modes. Wet weight for the base model is quoted in the low 190-kg range (no fuel), with the V4 S trading suspension and forged wheels for incremental mass savings and sharper responses.

What you feel on the twistgrip is the engine's two-personality act: up low and midrange it's muscular and communicative, but the top end is where the Desmosedici Stradale sings — the telegraphed, rev-hungry surge that makes the tach needle a catechism for aggression. On track the V4's power delivery is intoxicating; on the road it's thrilling with a cautionary note: throttle respect and rubber with good heat-cycle history are mandatory.

### Chassis, Suspension & Electronics

The Panigale V4's chassis is as much a part of its performance blueprint as the engine. A compact, lightweight monocoque and carefully distributed mass keep inertia low and turn-in knife-sharp. The base V4 uses high-end suspension and a chassis geometry tuned for razor accuracy; the V4 S upgrades to SmartEC-controlled Öhlins semi-active forks and steering systems, factory forged wheels and a lithium battery — options that translate into better track behaviour and firmer road manners for riders who want the extra edge.

Ducati's electronics package — the suite of traction control, wheelie control, slide control, engine braking regulation, cornering ABS and a three-level power-mapping system — is the invisible co-pilot that allows the machine to be both savage and safe. The V4's electronics are deeply integrated with the IMU and the ride-by-wire system; the rider can dial in aggression, or let the software reel in the raw engine to make the bike approachable in traffic or wet conditions. Reviews have praised the refinement of these systems — modern superbikes rely on them to extract lap times without chewing up confidence.

***“It turns like it's on rails — but it will bite if you forget it's a racebike at heart.”***

### Riding Impressions (road & track)

On a canyon road the Panigale V4's steering is immediate, the front end planting with clinical certainty through increasing lean angles. The chassis lets the rider be surgical with line choice: roll it on, let the electronics manage traction, and the bike accelerates with a linear but relentless shove. Keep the revs high and the V4 rewards the rider with a top-end rush that feels like being shoved by a piston-powered rocket. On the track, the V4's stability at high speed and under heavy braking is exemplary — the aero, mass distribution and suspension all conspire to make it confidence-inspiring at pace.

That said, the V4 is not for everyone. Ergonomically it's a superbike: aggressive tuck, high pegs and narrow bars. For long-distance comfort, touring capability or commuting practicality, other Ducati models are kinder. But for the rider seeking visceral engagement and the most direct translation of



throttle-to-acceleration, the V4 sits at the summit.

### The Range: V4, V4 S, V4 SP / SP2 and V4 R

Ducati offers the V4 in several trims to suit different intents:

- **Panigale V4 (base)** — the raw, excellent core model with the Desmosedici Stradale, road-orientated electronics and high-spec brakes. Ideal for riders wanting Ducati performance without all the factory race extras.
- **Panigale V4 S** — adds SmartEC semi-active Öhlins suspension, forged wheels, upgraded electronics tuning and a lithium battery. The S is the sweet spot for road riders who occasionally go trackdays but want more refinement and adjustability.
- **SP / SP2 / Limited Editions** — these variants dress the V4 in premium bits: carbon bodywork, special livery, performance cams or higher-output mapping, and more exclusive components. They are aimed at collectors and riders who want the most extreme, race-focused iteration without full homologation engineering. (See manufacturer spec sheets for the exact limited-run figures.)
- **Panigale V4 R** — a homologation and track-dedicated sibling. The V4 R uses a smaller-capacity, high-rev 998 cc engine tuned to make peak power higher in the rev range (reported around the 218 hp mark for the R), mechanical Öhlins race suspension and aero elements conceived for minimal lift and added downforce at speed. The R is focused on Superbike World Championship rules and is the factory's closest street-legal track weapon.

Where the S softens the edges with electronics and semi-active hardware, the R unapologetically chases lap times — and the price of this ambition shows in its specification list.

### Maintenance, Ownership & Practicalities

Owning a Panigale V4 is like keeping a thoroughbred: rewarding but not invisible. Service intervals, insurance and tyre consumption reflect the motorcycle's performance envelope. Modern Ducati dealers offer dedicated service packages and DesmoCare plans that mitigate ownership surprises, but budget realistically: premium tyres, high-performance brake pads, clutch and valve checks (desmodromic systems are robust but require periodic attention) and fuel quality all matter. On the upside, resale values for limited editions and well-maintained V4s remain healthy. The community support — track-day organizers, Ducati owners'

clubs and aftermarket performance specialists — means upgrades and setup advice are widely available.

### Styling, Aerodynamics & The Emotional Case

Stylistically the Panigale V4 is inseparable from the Ducati image: tight, aggressive lines, the single-sided swingarm, and bodywork that hints at function as much as form. Recent model iterations have added more refined aerodynamic touches and slimline radiators to improve high-speed stability and cooling without sacrificing the silhouette that made the Panigale iconic.

But beyond numbers, the Panigale V4 sells an emotion: it tells every rider who sits on it they're dealing with something serious. There's the smell of hot oil after a track session, the tactile click of a race-style gearbox, the almost musical bark at high revs. For many owners that sensory package is the true value proposition — speed is the advertised product, but connection is the real one.

**Recommendation box: If you want a Panigale V4, test-ride both the base V4 and the S variant; the S's semi-active suspension can change the whole personality of the bike.**



### Final Verdict — Who Should Buy One?

Buy a Panigale V4 if you crave the most direct connection between road and race — if you prioritise handling precision, top-end performance, and the cultural cachet of riding a Ducati with Desmosedici DNA. Choose the V4 S if you want more refinement or plan to spend time on track days but also ride on the road. If you want an out-and-out homologation machine, the V4 R exists — but it carries compromises for road riding. In short: the Panigale V4 is not a neutral tool; it's a focused statement. It demands attention, rewards commitment, and — for the right rider — delivers one of the most exhilarating two-wheeled experiences available today. For anyone who keeps a mental list of 'what I'd take to the track this weekend,' the Panigale V4 sits at or very near the top. 🏍️



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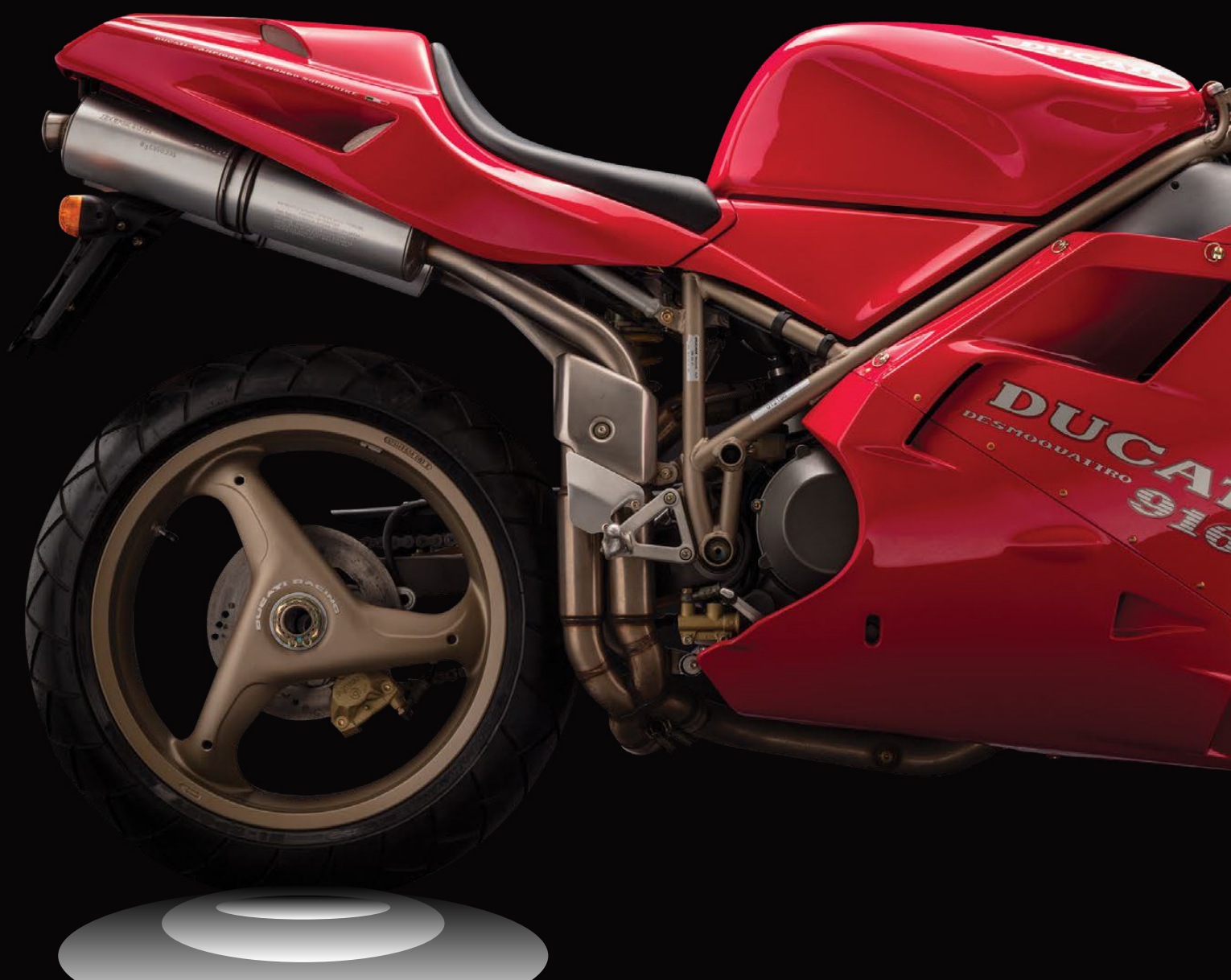


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# 15

## 30 YEARS AN ICON



It's hard to believe, but three decades have passed since the Ducati 916 erupted onto the motorcycle scene, redefining the standards of an entire sector and making an indelible mark on the history of Ducati and motorcycling.









### A timeless beauty

Technically, the Ducati 916 is an 888 taken to the extreme. The trellis frame is even narrower. The engine is the Desmoquattro with desmodromic timing developed by engineer Massimo Bordi, increased to 916 cc and reinforced in its most stressed mechanical parts. As for design, the Ducati 916 looks like nothing that has come before it. Distinctive elements such as the form-fitting fairing, the single-sided swingarm, the double

teardrop headlamp, or the oval-shaped tailpipes positioned under the tail, embody a design approach that combines new levels of style and performance, but also the pursuit of perfection, visible in its every detail. In the footpegs, for example, complete with grooves designed specifically for the disposal of dirt, irrespective of the angle of contact with the foot. Or the position of the patented steering damper, which compacts the steering area as far as possible.

There is a before. And there is an after.

The Ducati 916 is not a motorcycle. It is a work of art, an anthem to beauty. It is also the manifesto of a design vision that would go on to become an integral part of Ducati DNA. A winner both on track and on the markets, it is an object of desire for the fans. For everyone else, it is simply “the most beautiful motorcycle of all time”.

It is 1993. But it's as if it were today.




## A watershed event

It is 1993 and the world is in turmoil, awash with cultural change, social revolution, and technological progress. The old ideologies are giving way to new ideas and a desire for freedom. The minimalist wave carries away the excesses of the Eighties and redefines aesthetic standards. While cinema embraces the magic of special effects, music yells about the Seattle revolution and the sports world celebrates the feats of legends like Michael Jordan and Ayrton Senna, another icon prepares to make its mark.

In Borgo Panigale, Ducati is going through a decisive moment in its history. On the racetrack, WorldSBK success at the hands of Raymond Roche and Doug Polen means that the brand is on top of the world. Commercially, the company is still seeking full stability. Aware of what is at stake, the Castiglioni brothers, the firm's owners, put together a dream team of engineers, technicians and designers, steered by Massimo Tamburini.

A brilliant and passionate perfectionist, Tamburini has very clear ideas about what the successor to the 851 should be. And that's not all. He also has very clear ideas about what a true Ducati should look like. A bike like no other, particularly the Japanese bikes. A bike that has a clear and distinct style. That tells its own story.

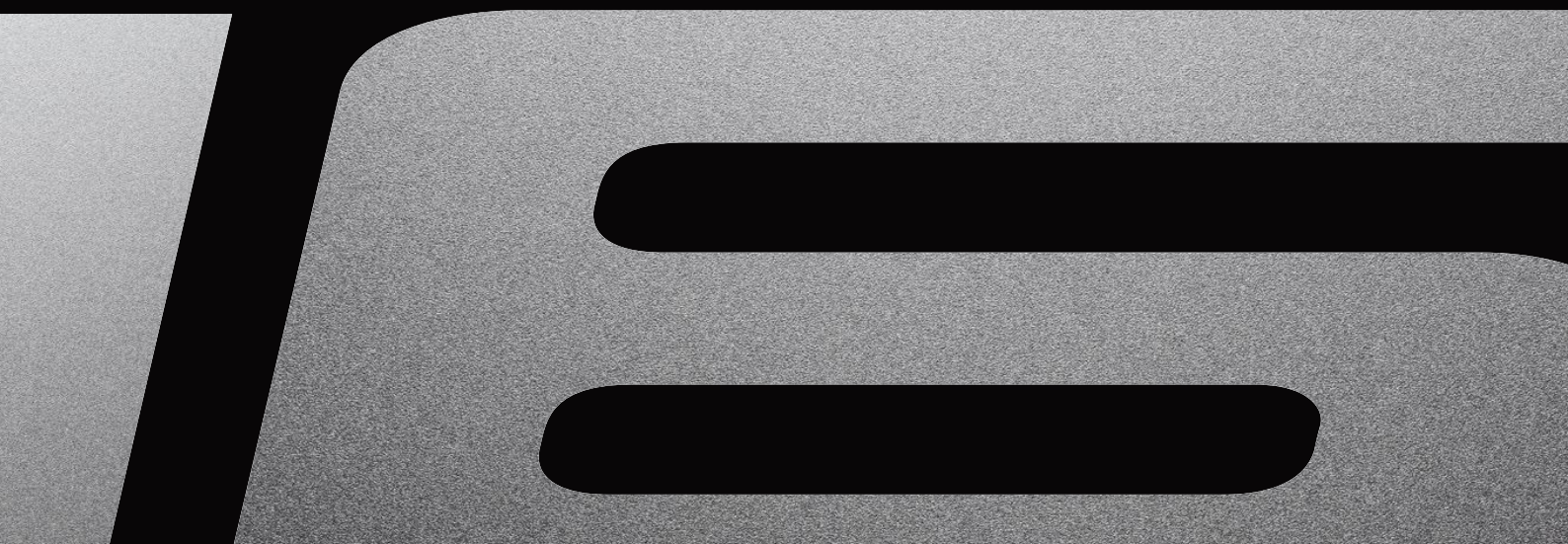
The team works in the utmost secrecy. Every time the prototype evolves, rather than testing it in the wind tunnel, Tamburini himself climbs aboard and travels the roads between San Marino and Rimini. Particularly on rainy days, when he is able to study the aerodynamic behaviour of the bike by watching the waterdrops slide down the superstructures. It's no surprise that he is known as the Michelangelo of motorcycling because, like a sculptor, Tamburini models his bikes until he achieves perfection. 

## BEEFED UP

The con rods are more robust to further improve reliability. With a meatier flywheel, inertia is up by 12% for easy low-speed control.



**“If what is simple is also effective,  
99 times out of a hundred  
it will also be beautiful”**





# IS IT A SUPERBIKE OR A SCOOTER



Italjet Dragster 700 Twin: Öhlins, Brembos, Akras, Márquez paint – Are they high?

By LHR Biker Magazine | Photography Italjet

Visiting the legendary Imola circuit for the first time is an experience in itself. This is Ducati, Bimota, Ferrari, Maserati, and Lamborghini country. And, tucked among them, Italjet.

A boutique Italian bike maker with serious two-wheeled heritage, Italjet was founded in the 1960s by Leopoldo Tartarini. Over the decades, it has produced a range of quirky, innovative machines powered by everything from CZ two-stroke singles to Triumph Bonneville twins. Today, I'm here to wrestle one of their latest creations around Imola: the **Dragster 700 Twin**.

Its steel trellis “space frame” might look scooter-inspired, with a semi-step-through chassis and upright riding position, but underneath beats a **692cc parallel twin** linked to a conventional manual gearbox and chain final drive. Running gear is first-rate: fully adjustable **Marzocchi 50mm USD forks**, an **Öhlins rear shock**, **Brembo radial calipers**, and **Pirelli Diablo Rosso rubber**. To top it off, it wears **Alex Márquez-style paintwork** and mini MotoGP-style **Akrapovic silencers**.

## Remind me what a Dragster is?

You may recall the original Dragster as a late-1990s city scooter with a skeletal steel tube frame, single-sided front suspension, and a snappy **19bhp two-stroke Gilera engine** in the 180 version. Fitted with expansion chambers and intake kits, they were notorious for pinging off black taxi doors with playful aggression.

## Where does the 700 engine come from?

In a sign of the times, the 2025 Dragster's engine is **sourced from China**, not Italy. It's a variant of the unit powering Benelli's **TRK702 adventure bike**. Italjet now operates globally, with R&D in Italy and manufacturing in Thailand, Indonesia, and China, making its partnership with QJMotor—Benelli's parent company—perfectly logical. Italjet boss **Massimo**

**Tartarini** sees huge potential in Chinese manufacturers, much like the Japanese brands of the 1970s.

## How does it handle on a track?

Having ridden scooters on tracks before, I can safely say the Dragster is surprisingly capable. The **premium suspension** and **light 190kg dry weight**, combined with sticky Pirelli tyres, make for a genuinely fun ride. Ground clearance is reasonable, the brakes are strong, and once you adjust to the semi-step-through stance, it's a proper giggle around the corners.

At the launch event, no one came off—a solid testament to the Dragster's composure. The engine, while smooth, lacks the punch you might want on Imola's long uphill sections. At **68bhp**, it tops out around a claimed 118mph—more than adequate for a 15-inch wheeled machine.

A **quickshifter is missing**, thanks to a conventional cable throttle rather than ride-by-wire. Still, a “track” mode allows switchable ABS and traction control.

## Can it work as a road scooter?

Not really. There's **no underseat storage or fairing pockets**, and any top box mount has to be bolted onto the seat's aerodynamic fins.

Cruise control is absent, and the radical bodywork with its vents and winglets will soak you in a wet commute. On the tech front, though, it's well-equipped: **colour dash**, tyre pressure monitor, **Bluetooth**, and integrated front/rear cameras. **Keyless ignition** adds a security bonus, but be warned: this bike will turn heads—and attract attention you might not want.

The **manual gearbox** and exposed **chain drive** further compromise everyday convenience, meaning the Dragster scores a **7/10 as a city scooter**.



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**‘Once you adjust to  
the riding position,  
it’s a proper laugh’**



First away from  
the lights on the  
city commute  
every time. If you  
ever see one...





# Kawasaki

## Ninja 1100 SX



**If you want one bike that can commute, carve canyon roads, and cover long distances without complaining, Kawasaki's Ninja 1100 SX is the kind of machine that quietly gets on with the job — and does a lot of jobs very well. For 2025 Kawasaki enlarged and refined the platform, and the result is a noticeably more usable, more civilized litre-class sport-tourer that still likes to hustle when you ask it to.**





**The Swiss Army Knife of Sport-Tourers**



**First impressions: composed, confident, ready to go**

From the saddle the Ninja 1100 SX feels like it sits in the sweet spot between a full-on sportbike and a touring machine. The ergonomics are relaxed enough for long miles — upright bars, a comfortable two-up seat and a windscreen that actually keeps the buffeting down — but the chassis, suspension and brakes are all ready to be hustled. Kawasaki hasn't tried to hide the bike's sporting roots: the frame stiffness, wheelbase and tyre choices still favour precision and confidence when the road tightens up.

Underneath the touring ready bodywork lies a retuned inline-four that's the centrepiece of the 1100's reboot. Kawasaki increased displacement to 1,099 cc, and while peak horsepower is slightly lower than the departing 1,043cc iteration, the important real-world gains are in the low-to-midrange torque — the area you feel every day on the road. That extra shove makes overtakes effortless and gives the bike a laid-back, usable character for fast touring. Pull quote: "More usable torque where you feel it — the 1100SX isn't about top-end bragging rights, it's about usable speed that makes riding easier."

**What's new for 2025 (and why it matters)**

Kawasaki's 2025 update is more than a simple capacity bump. The engine's increased stroke and revised internals are paired with optimized gear ratios and a refined Kawasaki Quick Shifter (KQS) tuned to work cleanly even at lower revs — which makes smooth, quick shifts during spirited riding or when you're easing through traffic. The electronics suite includes cornering ABS, traction control and rider modes, along with cruise control and full smartphone connectivity through Kawasaki's Rideology system (now with voice-command support), making the Ninja one of the most modern sport-tourers in its class.

If you option the SE spec you get Brembo front brakes and upgraded Öhlins components on the rear — a clear signal Kawasaki wants the SE to be the pick for riders who expect sportbike levels of stopping and handling in a touring package. Those who value premium hardware will find the SE a worthwhile upgrade.

**Engine, gearbox & performance**

The 1,099 cc DOHC inline-four produces roughly 134–136 PS (around 100 kW) and about 113 Nm of torque at mid-range rpm — numbers that translate into strong real-world performance rather than headline peak-rpm figures. The 6-speed gearbox is paired to a slipper-assist clutch and the optimized KQS, which together deliver smooth up- and down-shifts whether you're carving or touring. The net effect is a bike that feels lively without being sharp or twitchy — exactly what you want when you're loaded with luggage or two-up. On a long sweep the Ninja will happily settle into a cruise while still having plenty left in reserve for a bend-by-bend sprint. Kawasaki quotes strong fuel economy for the class (claimed figures put range well into the hundreds of miles on a full 19-litre tank), which makes the bike genuinely competent as a long-distance machine.

**Chassis, suspension and brakes**

Kawasaki uses a twin-tube aluminium frame that balances rigidity and comfort. Up front you get a 41 mm inverted fork with adjustments for preload, compression and rebound; the rear is a horizontal back-link shock with preload and rebound adjustments. The baseline model provides more than enough performance for tight sweepers and spirited mountain roads, while the SE's Öhlins and Brembo combo ups the precision and feedback for riders who demand sharper response. Braking power from twin 300 mm discs



and multi-piston calipers (Brembo on SE) brings race-derived feel to an otherwise very friendly chassis.

**Electronics & connectivity**

This is an area where modern sport-tourers separate themselves from older, simpler bikes — and Kawasaki hasn't held back. Cornering ABS and traction control work through an IMU to keep the bike stable under lean and throttle, while multiple riding modes let you pick the personality (Rain, Road, Sport and an individual setting). The dash is a clear TFT unit with smartphone integration via Rideology — mapping, logs, phone calls and voice commands are usable on the move, giving the Ninja a practical edge for tech-savvy riders who spend time away from home.



### Practicalities: luggage, ergonomics and touring kit

Kawasaki offers an impressive list of factory luggage options that bolt on neatly and keep the bike's profile tidy — panniers, inner bags and even a centre stand as dealer-fit extras. The seat height is accessible for most riders and the pillion perch is comfortable enough for long days. Small details like a handlebar USB-C outlet and sensible windscreen adjustability make everyday life easier and nudge the Ninja from 'sporty roadster' toward 'practical sport-tourer'.



### Rider experience — how it actually rides

On a mixed day of twisty roads and motorway miles the Ninja hits a sweet compromise. In the twisties it turns in crisply, holds its line and rewards mid-corner throttle with predictable exits. On the motorway it's relaxed and composed; cruise control and low vibration levels keep fatigue down over long miles. Two-up and loaded it remains composed — the extra midrange torque is especially welcome when carrying a passenger or luggage. Test riders consistently point out that the bike feels more mature and user-friendly than the older litre-class Ninjas, which were more overtly sporty but less accommodating for daily use.

### Spec sheet (quick at-a-glance)

- Engine: 1,099 cc liquid-cooled inline-4, DOHC.
  - Power: ~134–136 PS (100 kW) @ ~9,000 rpm.
  - Torque: ~113 Nm @ ~7,600 rpm.
  - Transmission: 6-speed with Kawasaki Quick Shifter, slipper clutch.
  - Fuel tank: 19 litres.
  - Wet weight: ~234–238 kg (varies by spec/market).
  - Brakes: Twin 300 mm front discs (Brembo on SE), single rear disc; cornering ABS.
  - Suspension: 41 mm inverted fork; horizontal back-link rear (Öhlins on SE).
- (Figures vary slightly by market and spec.)*

### Who is this bike for?

If you want one motorcycle that will do long weekend rides, act as a comfortable commuter and still let you enjoy canyon rides, the Ninja 1100 SX is aimed squarely at you. It's particularly strong for:


- Riders who want sportbike handling without the aggressive seating and narrow powerband.
- Two-up tourers who value a forgiving midrange.
- Tech-minded riders who appreciate modern electronics and smartphone integration.
- Those wanting a single bike that can be dressed up with luggage and used year-round.

If your priority is peak horsepower for track days, there are more focussed machines; but for real-world versatility the 1100SX is hard to beat.

### The verdict — convincing compromise

Kawasaki's Ninja 1100 SX isn't trying to be the sharpest scalpel in the drawer. Instead, it's a surgical Swiss army knife: capable, considered, and very effective across a broad range of use. The 2025 updates hone the package further — more displacement where it matters, an improved electronics and connectivity package, and an SE option that brings premium hardware for riders who want that last 10–15% of performance polish. For a sport-tourer that honestly does everything you ask of it, the Ninja 1100 SX sits near the top of the shortlist.

### Quick buyer's checklist

- Prefer midrange shove over peak-rpm top end? 1100 is for you.
- Want Brembo and Öhlins? Consider the SE.
- Planning long tours? Fit the factory luggage kit and enjoy the range.
- Need modern tech (voice, TFT, cornering ABS)? The Ninja delivers. 



# A RESURRECTION OF THE BEGINNING

*A skunkworks project that  
inadvertently established a  
new genre of motorcycling*

STORY BY DAVID BOOTH  
PHOTOS BY MARKUS  
JAHN  
& UWE FISCHER

**L**ike so many great discoveries — penicillin, Velcro and, yes, Viagra — BMW's GS was an accident. Okay, not quite an accident: the act of shoving a 797.5-cc Boxer twin into a motocross chassis hardly a random bit of engineering. But, at the very least, its instigation was, even way back in 1978, a sideshow, and its eventual success — leading to what has become motorcycling's fastest growing segment — was not remotely forecast. It was, in every sense of the word, a "skunkworks" project, the work of one or two men looking to conquer a racing series that almost no one today remembers.

## THE ORIGIN OF GENRE

The common refrain is that the "Gelände/Straße" was created to take BMW into the then hugely popular Paris-Dakar race. And indeed, at its launch in 1980, the G/S — the slash only lasted until the end of 1986, being dropped for the second-gen R100 GS — did enter the then-Africa-centric rally. And yes, they were dominant almost right out of the gate, winning in 1981, '83, '84 and '85 in the hands of Hubert Auriol and Gaston Rahier, both becoming legends in Paris-Dakar lore mainly for winning on what seemed then — and, truth be told, even now — a rather ungainly off-roader.







**“IT WAS, IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD, A “SKUNKWORKS” PROJECT, THE WORK OF ONE OR TWO MEN LOOKING TO CONQUER A RACING SERIES”**

But that’s not the real why of BMW’s G/S. In fact, according to BMW Motorrad itself, the truth is far more pedestrian. In 1977, Germany announced an off-road sport class for over 750-cc motorcycles and the company decided to use this as an opportunity to get back into off-road sport. They tasked one guy — yes, one person — with the job of creating a suitable dirt-biking Boxer and gave him three months to shoehorn the boxer twin into a dirt bike that



Standard seat height is 860 mm with the 17-inch rear wheel, but that seat height changes with the addition of the 18-inch wheel. Optional height seats are also available.

Equipped with a 21-inch wheel up front and a 17-inch rear wheel. An 18-inch rear wheel is available as part of the Enduro Package Pro for even greater off-road capability

The rear wheel is guided by BMW's Paralever swinging arm with 200 mm of travel from the fully adjustable rear suspension. Final drive is drive shaft

The air/oil-cooled, 1,170 cc capacity boxer engine delivers 109 hp at 7,000 rpm and a maximum torque of 84.8 lb.-ft. at 6,500 rpm



The front fork is fully adjustable to take on any terrain

weighed less than 142 kilos (just 313 pounds!).

That one man, Laszlo Peres, was also the chief road tester as well as the first man to enter the famed G/S into

competition. So while the Paris-Dakar may have created the legend of the G/S, it was not why the Gelände/ Straße (off-road/street) was created.

Nonetheless, from such humble beginning has the GS gradually turned into BMW's most popular model. Not only that, one can trace the origins of the entire adventure touring segment back to the original R80.

Pretty much every adventure bike since then — from KTM to Honda and Triumph to Royal Enfield — owes its being to that, again, skunkworks grafting of touring twin to motocross frame. And, oh, there's also an entire industry — from luxury travel providers to adventure-oriented accessory products — based on, again,

those BMW boys skunking about. So, perhaps the original deserves a C- for inspiration — because, even after its Paris-Dakar domination, no one thought big, multi-cylinder dirt bikes would turn into a *thing* — but most certainly an A+ for impact.

#### FAST FORWARD TO PRESENT DAY

All of which explains why BMW is recreating the original G/S all these years later. Based on an R12 platform — itself the basis for all kinds of nostalgic recreations — it's as faithful a "resto-mod" as one is likely to find in a showroom. So, not only is the new 2026 R12's primary livery all but identical to the 1980 model and various bits, like the front headlight nacelle, eerily reminiscent



Rain, Road and Enduro riding modes are standard. It also comes with Dynamic Traction Control (DTC) as standard, which can be switched off. In addition, it's also equipped with engine drag torque control (MSR). Riding mode "Enduro Pro" is part of the optional Enduro Package Pro

A faithful modern recreation of the classic enduro design inspired by the legendary BMW R80 G/S, first raced with great success in the Paris-Dakar race

Fully adjustable inverted 45 mm diameter telescopic fork gives up 210 mm of travel



The fully adjustable rear shock provides a generous 200 mm of travel.

its rear wheel while the latest R12 more than doubles that number with better throttle response, less vibration and, as long as you're not doing your best Dick-Mann-at-the-Peoria-TT-flat-tracking impression, superior fuel economy too.

The original GS' suspension was the very definition of old school; the R12 version rides on the latest in fully adjustable upside-down front forks and BMW's novel Paralever system. The R12 boasts a digital instrument cluster, cruise control and navigation system; the R80 not so much. They are, unsurprisingly, worlds apart in every possible performance, technology and convenience arena.

### BUT DOES IT CAPTURE THE SPIRIT OF THE ORIGINAL?

The easy answer — and I suspect the answer that both BMW and its legion fans want to hear — is that, for the most part, it does. For one thing, like

the original, BMW is serious about the new G/S' off-road bona fides. As incongruous — then *or* now — as it may seem to make a dirt bike out of a big lump of a Boxer twin and shaft drive, Munich's engineers have spared no expense or technology in making this new R12 genuinely berm-ready.

Standard equipment, for instance, is a dirt bike-ready 21-inch front rim with a 17-incher in the back, both shod with dual-purpose, semi-knobby tires. But serious dirt donks can upgrade to an Enduro Pro package that substitutes in a truly off-road-worthy 18-incher in the rear that not only allows an upgrade to more seriously knobbified off-road rubber but adds 15-mm of extra ground clearance

### THINKING OF THE DIRT

It also raises the seat height from the standard model's 860-millimetres to 875-mils (Jolly Green Giants can also opt for a seat that takes things to

of the original, but BMW says the new bike's profile, touchpoints and even its ergonomic triangle — the handlebar-to-seat-to-footpeg relationship — are virtually identical.

To prove it, the company's PR boffins overlaid a schematic of the new 2026 model with the 46-year-old original and damned if they weren't all but inseparable. As an homage to the icon, the R12 G/S is certainly visually authentic, emulating the original far better, for instance, than the R12 S does to BMW's equally iconic R90 S.

Of course, that's just the look. Technologically, they are of different eras, the R80 powered by an air-cooled, overhead valve that could, on its best day, deliver barely 50 horsepower to







a skyscraper-like 895-mm). There's also an enduro footrest system with three rows of spikes so your feet don't inadvertently slide off when you're deep in the bog. BMW even marks the handlebar so that you can rotate the grips exactly 10 degrees they think is the perfect position for standing up while riding off-road.

Nonetheless, perhaps the detail that, to me, signifies quite how serious the new GS' designers were about maximizing the R12's off-road potential is that they spec'ed the 45-millimetre, upside down front fork with 15 extra millimetres of length so that owners, were they especially keen, could swap between the 17- and 18-inch rear tires and not upset the steering geometry. That might, to those not accustomed to the ways of factory customs, just seem like common sense, but in reality, it shows BMW was determined to go the extra mile to make sure the new GS performs as it should.

#### SO, DOES ALL THIS A DIRT BIKE MAKE

With caveats, yes, it does. That caveat

is a large one, both metaphorically and physically. The one issue is that you can have all the long-travel suspension (210-millimetres up front; 200-mm in the rear) and perfectly bent motocross-like handlebars (which the new G/S has), but 229 kilograms is a whole heckuva lot of dirt bike. In fact, it's about 86 kg — almost an entire 250-cc motocrosser — more than Peres' skunkworks Franken-crosser that started this whole mess.

For a hardly-ever-was, it's a bit much. Oh, the suspension — damping adjustable at both ends and variable preload in the rear — will soak up some pretty gnarly terrain. And the anti-lock brake programming of BMW's Enduro Pro mode — reduced-but-still-present ABS functioning in the front, ABS completely disabled in the rear — is just what Gaston Rahier would have ordered.

Ditto for how the engineers mapped out the traction control intervention off-road. And the throttle response, for a 1,170-cc, 109-hp engine designed primarily for street riding, is amazingly delicate. Hell, there's even a Hill Start Control Pro function so that if you

stall the big beast halfway up a steep incline, you won't slide all the way back down trying to get going again.

#### SAVE YOUR ENERGY FOR THE RIDE

But — and this is a big but — it weighs over 500 pounds and measures 1,580-millimetres (62.2 inches) between axles! For expert off-roaders, whose finesse easily trumps my fitness, that just requires a little extra caution. For never-wases and weekend wannabes — again, that's me — controlling that much mass through a long washout or constantly correcting steering over rocky terrain is a little tiring.

Our Canadian contingent managed BMW's famed Enduro Park without flipping ass-over-tea-kettle or bashing protruding flat-twin cylinders off rocks but many calories were expended. As in, there was little energy left over for the requisite end-of-trip partying that night. Just so we're clear, the R12 G/S will take you as deep into the boondocks — especially in its Enduro Pro guise — as any 500-plus pound motorcycle can. Just make sure to eat your Wheatabix before you head out to destinations unpaved.

#### HIGHWAY HANDLING

On road, the G/S is perhaps even more amazing, if only because that 90/90-21 offroad front tire does little — Hell, almost nothing — to compromise on-road handling. In fact, despite its seemingly singular focus on off-road comportment, the on-road handling is not hardly diminished.

The G/S turns in readily — a trait usually compromised by the aforementioned tall, skinny tire — high-speed stability is excellent and, other than a little more brake dive than you might want, pretty much everything about the chassis works great when there's no mud to be found.

Even the brakes, so thoughtfully controlled by software off-road, prove powerful enough. Oh, with only two pistons in the front calipers clamping on 310-mm discs, there isn't the ferocious whoa-now-Nellie bite of four-piston Brembos. But, considering the traction limitations of that skinny front tire, I suspect more braking power would be largely wasted.



### ADEQUATELY COMFORTABLE

The new G/S is also passably comfortable. The seat, designed primarily to allow freedom of movement off-road, is not nearly as hard as you might expect. Ditto the seating position, which even if wind protection is minimal, is perfectly fine up until 120 km/h or so. Perhaps the biggest indicator of comfort is that, at the end of three long days of riding, pretty much all the testers present — at least those over 40 — would have begged to be sitting on the G/S rather than the plank-like perch that adorns the R1300 R.

And that great lump of an engine is right at home cruising backroads and freeways. The last of BMW's air/oil-cooled flat twins, it boasts less horsepower — 109-horsepower versus 145-hp — than the new liquid-cooled 1300s, but most of that is at higher revs. For the kind of riding typical of a bike like the G/S — where short-shifting through its six gears well below redline is the norm, not the exception — there's more than enough urge.

It's not the most thrilling example of internal combustion in the motorcycling world, but it is one of the friendliest. My only complaint is that the optional Shift Assistant Pro — that's BMW's long-winded name for its quickshifter — is sometimes reluctant to bang into the next gear. I suspect that the Boxer twin's heavy flywheel confounds even the fanciest computer-controlled ignition intervention.

### BEAUTIFUL IN ITS DESIGN

All that said, I suspect that for many who shop this segment, the G/S will simply be a styling exercise and, as you can see in the accompanying pictures, the R12 certainly fills that bill too. Oh, the all-black base Night Black Matte version is extremely forgettable, but the khaki-like Option 719 Aragonite version is a right looker. Half Paris-Dakar wannabe, half camouflaged Rommel desert rat, it's a head-turner of the first order. Were it not for the Light White version with its iconic white gas tank with blue accents and red seat faithfully mimicking the original R80, it would be the most popular model.

All BMWs — even those with off-road pretensions — have a huge

## "MUNICH'S ENGINEERS HAVE SPARED NO EXPENSE OR TECHNOLOGY IN MAKING THIS NEW R12 GENUINELY BERM-READY"

catalogue of accessories. The R12 G/S (\$18,195) is no exception. There's a Headlight Pro option for greater illumination, a lighter M lightweight lithium-ion battery, an emergency call device (handy perhaps if you can't pick up the bike after yet another spill in the boonies), and a Pillion package (including a different seat and pillion footpegs) to accommodate a passenger. Hell, there's even a chrome-plated intake manifold available though, for the life of me, I can't see how it fits with the whole authentic bush-bashing thing the R12 has going on.

There's also a tire-pressure monitoring system available as well as cruise control, but both are optional. And, of course, there's all manner of connectivity available — a navigation system and a phone cradle amongst others — but I would have thought that the point of deep woods exploration was to get away from it all.

While other motorcycle marques flounder — the Japanese makes are scaling way back on the development of big-bore bikes and KTM, well, they're still selling 2024's inventory — BMW keeps on bounding from success to success. Not only does it have many historical icons that it can revisit, but with few exceptions, it does a bang-up job of modernizing them. If it were a couple — okay, maybe a few more than a couple — pounds lighter, the new R12 G/S might be damn near perfect.



## MANUFACTURER'S SPECS

### LIST PRICE

On Request

### WARRANTY

36 month, unlimited mileage

### CONTACT

bmw-motorrad.co.za

### ENGINE TYPE

Air/oil cooled boxer engine with four valves per cylinder

### DISPLACEMENT

1,170 cc

### POWER

109 hp (80 kW) at 7,000 rpm

### TORQUE

84.8 lb. ft. (115 Nm) at 6,500 rpm

### BORE AND STROKE

101/73 mm

### COMPRESSION RATIO

12:1

### FUEL DELIVERY

Fuel injection, digital engine management system with throttle-by-wire. Premium fuel

### TRANSMISSION

6-speed

### FINAL DRIVE TYPE

Drive shaft

### FRONT SUSPENSION

45 mm inverted forks, adjustable preload, rebound and compression damping

### REAR SUSPENSION

Paralever swing arm, single shock, preload, rebound and compression damping adjustable

### WHEEL TRAVEL

Front: 210 mm (8.26 in.)  
Rear: 200 mm (7.8 in.)

### BRAKES

Front: Two 310 discs with 2-piston calipers  
Rear: 265 mm disc with 2-piston caliper

### WHEELBASE

1,580 mm (62.2 in.)

### RAKE AND TRAIL

26.9 degrees/120.8 mm

### TIRES

Front: 90/90-21  
Rear: 150/70 R 17

### WEIGHT (WET)

229 kg (505 lb)

### SEAT HEIGHT

860 mm (33.8 in.)

### FUEL CAPACITY

15.5

### FUEL ECONOMY (CLAIMED)

5.1L/100 km

### FUEL RANGE (ESTIMATED)

300 km



# THE TOY RUN 2025 – THUNDERING GENEROSITY ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA



On 30 November 2025, South Africa's Toy Run once again proved how a shared hobby can morph into a social movement. It's an event where leather meets largesse; where throttle and tenderness coexist; and where thousands of strangers become a single convoy of compassion. The toys handed over on that Sunday will arrive in homes where the season matters tangibly; for many children those small plastic engines and stuffed toys are more than playthings — they are signs that a wider community has taken notice.

If the Toy Run's history tells us anything, it's that motorcyclists will keep answering the call. They'll gather, rev, donate and ride — and in doing so, they'll keep the simple ritual alive: giving joy, one toy at a time. For readers who want to explore more, regional Facebook pages and the national Toy Run site offer galleries, routes and historical background — useful resources for anyone who'd like to join the next ride or support the charities that benefit.

**Sources & further reading :** ToyRun.co.za (national site), Killarney International Raceway posts and event pages, GoodThingsGuy coverage of the 2025 Cape Town event, IOL Weekend Argus preview, Quicket event listing and multiple regional Facebook Toy Run pages for Durban, Pretoria and Overberg.



On the last Sunday of November each year, a different kind of engine note rolls through the towns and highways of South Africa — a low, joyful rumble filled with throttle, chrome, and purpose. The Toy Run, the country's largest motorcycle charity mass ride, returned on **30 November 2025**, with thousands of riders from every province answering the same call: bring a toy, bolster a smile, and hand over the season's best kind of noise. From Cape Town's sweeping flats to KZN's coastal bends, Pretoria's suburban arteries and the Overberg's scenic lanes, bikers and their pillions converged, donated and handed out mountains of toys to charities and homes in time for Christmas.

This year's Toy Run was notable not just for the numbers but for the scale of coordination. In Cape Town, riders gathered at multiple start venues — including GrandWest and Athlone Stadium — and merged into the massive procession that rolled into Killarney International Raceway. Organisers reported the event filled trucks and trailers with donated gifts, and local news outlets carried eye-catching images of the haul: pallets, boxes and three large trucks packed with toys bound for distribution. The imagery underscored how a grassroots motorcycle tradition has become one of South Africa's most reliable channels of festive giving.

### **The day in motion**

Dawn found meet-ups alive with banter, coffee and the clink of helmets into storage lockers. Ride-outs left from dozens of hubs — bike shops, shopping centre decks, community halls and clubhouses — with routes mapped to converge on central collection points. In Durban the local Toy Run chapter set off from The Club House Camperdown; Pretoria's riders rolled from Kolonnade Retail and other suburbs; Cape Town's mass rides left from N1 City and Athlone to end at Killarney. The national structure of the Toy Run is decentralised by design: individual clubs and regions run their own collection drives and rides, yet everyone shares the same destination — a charitable outpouring of toys, donations and goodwill.

Crowds at the final venues were a joyful blend of metal and mittens. Local stallholders, volunteer teams, firefighters, and social workers set up donation points and sorting lines; youngsters ran about inspecting bikes or clambering onto parked cruisers for photos. Live music and family-oriented stalls turned the end points into micro-festivals — all the more proof that the Toy Run has become more than a riders' ritual: it's a community-facing

event that invites everyone to participate, whether on two wheels or on foot.

### **Toys, tallies and trucks**

Quantifying kindness is always imperfect, but reporting from the weekend painted a clear picture: thousands of toys changed hands. In Cape Town alone organisers and media reported vast volumes collected — enough to fill multiple trucks bound for charities — and local news highlighted the logistics required to sort and funnel the gifts to homes and nurseries across the Western Cape. Smaller regional runs across the country mirrored the same outcome: dozens of charities and non-profits received toys, knitted goods, books and cash donations. These distributions were often coordinated with municipal social services, local shelters and child welfare organisations. It's worth noting how local groups amplified their impact. In Durban, a story in the Highway Mail captured a heartwarming example: seniors in Pinehaven had been hand-knitting toys in the week leading up to the Toy Run, supplying soft, homemade gifts that were added to the larger piles of donated store-bought toys. This intergenerational participation — from clubs and commuters to retirees and emergency services — is part of what keeps the Toy Run culturally meaningful.

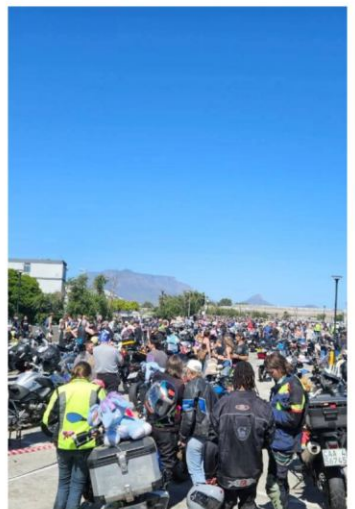
### **A brief history: where the roar began**

The Toy Run's roots date back to the early 1980s. In Gauteng, the Motorcycle Toy Run was founded in **1982** by the Italian Motorcycle Owners Club (IMOC), beginning as a single-club charity ride and steadily growing into a province-spanning effort. Over the decades the concept spread: groups in Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and the Overberg started their own mass rides, mirroring the same ethic of biking-for-good. Regional organisers collaborated informally, and the event's positioning at the tail end of November made it a natural festive-time tradition.

What began as modest collections of a few hundred toys has grown into one of Africa's largest charity motorcycle events. Cape Town's Toy Run, for instance, has evolved through several decades — with anniversaries celebrated, routes changed and an expanding roster of beneficiaries. The event's longevity stems from the riding community's consistent commitment and its openness: riders of every make and creed — scooters, sportsbikes, cruisers and dirt bikes — are welcome, and everyone's invited to give. The result is a national patchwork of Toy Runs, each one contributing to a broader, shared purpose.

### **The culture behind the chrome**







The Toy Run's emotional signature is a blend of show-and-give. Riders love their machines; they also love the statement those machines make when lined up shoulder-to-shoulder for a cause. For many participants, the run is a ritual of giving-back — a motorcycling expression of community stewardship that reframes the bike as not only a personal vehicle but also an instrument of kindness.

The day is also deeply social: clubs ride together, old friends catch up, newbies find mentors, and families come out. For younger volunteers, seeing the bikes and grown riders in leather becomes a lasting memory — one that may well be the first lesson in organised charity they receive. This duality — the reverence for the ride and the tenderness of the cause — is what makes the Toy Run endure.

### **Logistics and safety: the unseen work**

Behind the spectacle is serious planning. Local organisers liaise with municipal authorities to secure permission for start points, routes and end venues; marshals and experienced riders manage pace and formation; volunteers coordinate toy sorting, registration and distribution. Public messaging through Facebook groups, event pages and community channels plays a major role in marshalling participants and sharing real-time updates — the Toy Run's social-media footprint is as important as its roadside presence. Many of the run's regional pages kept riders informed in the weeks leading up to 30 November, posting routes, start times and collection instructions. Safety messaging also emphasised adherence to road rules and responsible riding. Organisers and police urged riders to travel in formation safely, respect traffic laws, and watch for vulnerable road users. Given the scale of the mass rides — sometimes tens of thousands of riders converging in a single city — the mix of safety and showmanship is a constant operational priority.

### **Voices from the ride**

Riders spoke of the Toy Run as a highlight of the motorcycling calendar. For club presidents and independent riders alike, participation is an annual obligation with deep personal reward: “We ride so kids can smile,” is a refrain commonly heard at meet-ups. Volunteer coordinators noted the reliance charities place on the Toy Run's contributions — in many communities the annual haul of gifts materially improves the festive season for dozens of homes and daycare centres. Local media coverage — from community weeklies to digital news outlets — amplified these testimonies, giving the public a window into how the event changes lives on the ground.

### **Challenges and critiques**

No event of this size runs without friction. Organisers sometimes face criticism over routes that congest city arteries, and there are occasional disputes about fair distribution between beneficiary organisations. Weather and traffic complications occasionally force last-minute changes. There's also a broader conversation within the charity sector about long-term solutions versus episodic giving: while toys brighten a child's Christmas, many advocates urge sustained support for education, nutrition and healthcare initiatives. Toy Run organisers are increasingly mindful of these critiques and some chapters have started complementary year-round initiatives — from food drives to school-supply collections — to broaden their impact.

### **The ripple effect**

What the Toy Run creates is a ripple: bikers bringing toys become the spark that activates volunteers, charities, and civic groups. Employers sometimes grant workers the morning off to attend; families bring picnic blankets to spend the day at the end-venue; mechanics and retailers donate gift cards or services. Local fire departments and rescue teams commonly participate, sometimes assisting with collection logistics. For the public, the run is an accessible moment to witness community solidarity — and for the riders, it's an annual affirmation that the biking community stands up for its neighbours.

### **Looking ahead: keeping the engine running**

The Toy Run's future looks secure precisely because of its simplicity: a ride, a toy, a destination. Yet evolving community needs and rising logistical complexity demand clearer organisation, stronger partnerships with social services, and more structured distribution plans. Happily, that's already happening in many regions: organisers are professionalising volunteer management, engaging sponsors for logistical support, and expanding year-round charitable initiatives.

Social media will remain crucial. Facebook event pages, group posts and local news coverage are the lifeblood of coordination — and they provided much of the lead-up information for the 2025 rides. Those channels also offered a way to celebrate successes in real time: photos of packed trucks, smiling volunteers, and children receiving gifts trended across feeds in the days after 30 November.



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CLUB: \_\_\_\_\_ CONTACT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

RIDER: ☐ PILLION: ☐ EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

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BRANCH CODE:	051001
ACCOUNT NUMBER:	276648366
ACCOUNT NAME:	NOBS
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