

# REVIEW - SUZUKI BERGMAN 400

## REVIEW BY WILLIAM MORRIS

First off, a word of appreciation is in order for Gary at Umpleby Suzuki for organizing us a test day aboard Suzuki's Burgman 400. Scooters are becoming more popular by the day as people are recognizing their financial viability and convenience of use in city traffic. But who wants to putt down the freeway at 100kph? Enter the businessmen's scooter: 400cc's of Burgman luxury.

**FIRST IMPRESSION** - The Burgman 400 is a truly classy affair, its low ground clearance and lengthy 1590mm wheelbase give a stretched-limousine like appearance. From the 5-spoke



wheelbarrow size mags to the shiny chrome mirrors, this scooter has style!

**CONTROLS AND GADGETS** - The dashboard (an unusual term to be found in a bike review, I know) is home to clocks that look like they've been stolen off a Boeing, which suit perfectly the common thread of sophistication and refinement. Below the clocks and handlebars are two small storage compartments on each side for wallets, cell phones and such, and below that is one large cubbyhole that could hold files or paperwork. Under seat storage holds two helmets easily with room to spare. The seat lifts itself hydraulically with a turn of the key in the ignition; get ready to impress your friends and colleagues!

**PERFORMANCE** - Power is derived from a 385cc 4-stroke, single-cylinder, SOHC, 4-valve motor, which is liquid-cooled, the final drive being executed by shaft. The Burgman is an automatic – a V-belt, CVT automatic, to be precise. Continuously variable transmission or CVT is a type of automatic transmission which can smoothly alter its gear ratio by varying the diameter of a pair of belt-linked cones. Let me explain... A belt is used to connect two opposing cones, these cones move in and out giving the same effect as changing the pulley diameter on a standard transmission since the belt or chain must take a large-diameter path when the conical pulley halves are close together. This makes actual gear changes non-existent; and while this makes for very smooth acceleration, the traditional abrupt gear changes disappear, negating the expected jerkiness associated with torque, giving a false sense of a lack of apparent power. For example... In my first few minutes on the Burgman I was headed down a city street and decided to give the throttle a little tweak to pull away from traffic. All is well, I pull ahead nicely and glance down at the speedo, the clock says 80, which is about what I had expected, but jeepers I'm only leaving the traffic behind at a rapid pace! Take another look at the speedo... I am doing 80... 80mph (130kph)! The acceleration is just so smooth that it becomes difficult to judge actual speed.

**SUSPENSION & HANDLING** - As long as the direction is straight, stability is a not an issue, even at the +150kmp/h top-speed, but tight cornering reveals spongy suspension, while any form of disruption of road surface mid-bend causes it to become quite unsettled. This is of course the great trade off – supreme comfort in and around town reducing all minor bumps and jolts, at the cost of (or perhaps the loss of) solid handling, a trait that the Burgman sacrifices willingly, and rightly so – this is, after all, the most elegant ride one can expect on two wheels. Brakes feel soft and require a hard squeeze on the levers to get the desired reaction, remember this is a scooter so no rear foot brake, both brakes are on your handlebars.

**COMFORT** - There are two feet positions to choose from, the standard scooter flat-foot, and then the super comfy chopper-like feet position stretched out in front of you at a 45 degree angle, very useful for keeping you from sliding off the seat under hard breaking. The driver's position is graced with a lower back rest that added a great deal more comfort to an already accommodating fully-upright position; this is the ideal vehicle for touring if you're one of those "I like to take it easy and enjoy the scenery" type people, the passenger gets a back rest too, and is provided with more than enough seating room. Passenger position is much higher than the operator's allowing an unobstructed view above the driver's head, which is great. This also means the passengers head is well above the wind protection of an otherwise ample screen, which is not so great.

**OVERALL RATING** - In the words of a certain salesman at Umpleby Suzuki, "This is the Mercedes-Benz of scooters" and indeed it is.

PRICE - R44,500.00 including VAT

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