

REVIEW - BMW R1200GS Adventure

REVIEW BY WILLIAM MORRIS

Auto Umhlanga has once again made one of the latest and greatest from BMW available for review. Thanks Ian for making the necessary arrangements.

FIRST IMPRESSION - The GS Adventure looks big and mean enough to tackle anything. It seems quite wide and bulky, and it is tall, giving an overall sentiment of domineering toughness. A vast improvement has taken place in appearance compared to the 1150 GS it replaces. The '06 features extensive remodelling and the revamped clocks suit the fresh and exciting lines.



CONTROLS AND GADGETS - Heated grips, additional spotlights, side and rear case holders, and ABS braking that can be disconnected for off-road use are some of the many features that add to the appeal of the Adventure. Mirrors offer a completely unhindered view – what a pleasure to not have to shift arms and shoulders out of the way to check out surroundings.

PERFORMANCE - The Adventure takes some time to learn and the more kay's travelled, the more I felt in tune with the bike; and the more I understood its character, the more I enjoyed it. You want personality? The GS has it in spades! Powered by BMW's famous Boxer flat twin-cylinder, the 1200cc redlines at a low 7750rpm but feels happier shifting long before then, giving the substantial 115Nm of torque opportunity to show itself. The smooth low down pull made so much sense on the dirt. It felt at home out in the cane fields and along dirt roads; sand, rocks, and mud are the Adventure's playground. But it is a heavy bike so once it starts falling down, nothing's going to stop it. Thankfully, indicators, tank and seat are well protected by crash bars, saving plenty of money over the long run if this bike is going to be utilized to its full potential. Gear changes are smooth and precise every time, allowing multiple shifts at a time without a hint of stickiness – every clutch setup should feel this good.

SUSPENSION & HANDLING - The chunky GS offered its biggest surprise in the handling arena. At 256kg's fully fuelled, there is a lot of bike to handle. But wide handlebars and tall seat height allows it to be flipped from side to side with little effort. Handling has a playful nature, with surprisingly good road handling allowing peg scraping around bends with a bit of concentration – even with multi-terrain knobbles on, surprisingly enough. I did find the frame quite flexi, giving a bit of a bouncy, unpredictable feeling through corners as the wheels move out of line with each other. Suspension is on the soft side, hopping ditches and sidewalks in its stride.

COMFORT - The high seat may be an issue for shorter riders, but this bike really needs every inch of its ground clearance to handle the types of terrain it's made for. A long stretch to the pegs, upright seating position and a really comfy seat makes for an ideal long distance traveller. Pillion position is well furnished with solid grab-rails, a wide cushion and relaxed peg positions. The windscreen is adjustable and gave great protection for effortless cruising at 150kmh+. Protection was not just offered by the screen – hand savers, the extra duckbill mudguard in the front, and well-designed frame surrounding the tank meant the only evidence of a quick trek through the mud is a splash or two on the boots. This surely is the gentleman's venture bike!

OVERALL RATING - A multi-tasker proficient in numerous areas is what big adventure bikes are all about. I found the big Beemer's handling on tar to be light-footed, entertaining and capable. Off-road was where expectations were certainly exceeded; the type of terrain this 1200 takes in its stride would suit trail bikes half the size.

If you've lived on the tar most your life, you may be surprised how much fun you can safely have on a bike outbond for adventure. Go on – discover some of this country of beauty which we inhabit.

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