

REVIEW: '08 KAWASAKI ZX14

REVIEW BY HEIN JONKER

Ian from East Coast Kawasaki knows exactly what to give me to ride when he wants to get a point across. Now that I'm no longer riding a Busa I can safely say ... I JUST LUV WHAT KAWA HAS DONE TO THIS NEW ZX14!!

My very first impression was the comfort and the perfect hands-feet-seat position I found myself in when I got on this bike; it doesn't feel like I'm riding a "1300 R6" with my legs cramped-up. When I gave the ZX14 back and I had to get back on my Busa I was so depressed! Yeah you guessed it, I'm selling it.

OK, enough of that, here is how I experienced the 2008 ZX14 ... the bike retains all the great features that made it a legend, plus more bottom, mid and top-end power. Changes to the engine and exhaust system allow it to comply with strict Euro-III emissions and tightening noise regulations.

To meet noise standards, the engineers focused on reducing internal mechanical noise instead of muzzling the exhaust system. The result wasn't a power loss, but an overall improvement of the engine character and an actual increase in the ZX-14's legendary peak power! Yes, you read that correctly. Emissions and noise levels are lower, peak power is higher, the mid-range hit is stronger and smoother and low-end torque has been increased. A win-win solution for all, in my book.

Featuring a relaxed sport riding position, the ZX-14 is compact without being cramped, with its bars positioned within easy reach. The narrow engine, monocoque frame, and fuel tank provide a slim rider interface. Footpegs are low-set to give ample legroom and the low seat height and narrow seat front make it easy to plant both feet on the ground when stopped. Comfort levels are high enough that riders might think they're on a dedicated sport tourer, but one twist of the ZX-14's throttle is all it takes to remind anyone this is the world's quickest and most powerful production motorcycle.

Uninterrupted fairing lines give the ZX-14 a smooth, flowing appearance from front to rear due in part to the monocoque frame that goes over the engine and doesn't protrude through the cowling. Quadruple projector beam headlights adorn the ZX-14's front, with low beams in the two centre lenses and the outer lenses containing the high beams and position lamps. The turn signals are cleanly integrated into the fairing and rear cowl with a unique "V" design LED tail lamp capping off the sleek aerodynamics of the ZX-14 that reinforces Kawasaki's aircraft heritage.

This blending of form, power, and handling characteristics yields a motorcycle with appeal that extends far outside of its high performance audience. The Ninja ZX-14 lives up to its Ninja heritage, by surpassing the competition.

Petal-style 310mm front rotors work with radial-mount four-piston callipers to offer very good feel and excellent stopping power. The adjustable inverted 41mm fork is a great compliment to the stable chassis and the single Bottom-Link Uni-Track rear suspension is more than up to the task for either touring or sporting duty.

The smooth and easy action of the clutch along with a slick-shifting six-speed transmission are always welcome. The ZX gear changer is still precise, never once missing a beat or giving reason to complain. Once in second gear, however, it's capable of going fast enough to land a person in jail for the night. There's not a lot of engine buzz at legal speeds but it does still transmit some vibes through the bars at higher rpm, but the mirrors offer a good view no matter how fast the pistons are punching. There is sure no lack of power on this bike, since it features a ridiculous torque band to go along with the claimed 200bhp. Whether you are cruising on the highway or participating in more 'entertaining' sport riding, this motor has anything this side of a ZX-10 covered if you are compelled to run at the front of the group.

As with all good things coming to an end, so it was with this ZX14. I haven't been on a more power-loving comfortable bike in a long time. Kawasaki offers you a once in a lifetime opportunity to own a piece of history, the ZX14, absolute value for money ... most satisfying.

PRICE

R115 995.00 Incl. 14% VAT



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