REVIEW: Aprilia Dorsoduro 1200

I've been watching news abroad and how the market was taking to the Aprilia Dorsoduro 1200 so when East Coast Motorcycles called me and said they finally had one, and a demo to test ride, well let's just say I couldn't get there quick enough.

There is not exactly a huge range in the market for large super motard style bikes. There is the Ducati Hypermotard, the KTM Super Duke, the KTM Supermoto and until now not really much else. They are all great bikes in their own rights but for one reason or another haven't grabbed me.

I like big road bikes that feel like dirt bikes, I like sitting up straight, I like big wide bars, I like tucking up and into the tank and up into the seat, and I like POWER. I don't necessarily want SPEED, so the choices had been far and few between until Aprilia have stepped into the spotlight with the new 1200 Dorsoduro.

First impressions were good. The bike sits up straight has a fairly high seat position which is perfect for me at 6'2" and all arms and legs. It certainly looks tough in my eyes, aggressive and just like a big overpowered dirt bike with street wheels and bits of fairing that make it look menacing but respectable enough. Great looking instrument dash which once the bike is turned on does the Logo thing while it sets itself up with a really wide range of information available at a quick glance. A shift light, gear indicator, temp gauges, digital speedo and all the normal hazard and indicator lights you'd expect from a road going street-fighter. Very minimal screen just covering the headlight but hey, it's a naked.

Once on I immediately felt comfortable, the bike feels light has an excellent steering full lock of the bars so you could potentially full cross it up in the dirt, not that I'll be going there with this. The display incorporates the Aprilia 'Menu' system, a left and right slider that gives you further access to menu's and advanced settings on the digital dash like Lap Timers and Diagnostics, no time to play with that stuff right now, I want to ride this thing.

All good, locked in and I am off into traffic. I got to the front of the traffic lights and the moment it changed I gave it a gentle twist out of first into second and then gave it stick down the freeway doing 80km/h at 4500RPM in nano seconds, the front wheel wanted to come up and I had to tap the back brake and drop the throttle before I knew what was happening. This thing is way faster than I imagined.

Being accustomed to fairly serious torque and my love of big V-Twins I wasn't expecting that big four feeling and face-shredding speed. I was shaking but loving it.

I did it again from the lights and this time just gave intermittent massive twists of throttle and quick shifts through to fourth and by the time I could make out what the digital display was even doing I was way over all speed limits and heading straight into full loss of license, lock me up and throw away the key territory.

I decided to hit a U-turn and head down the beach road to see how it turned and was surprised again at just how nimble and light it felt for a 1200. Weight is no issue it turns really sharp and feels amazingly reassuring to ride, in fact it is very easy to ride and ride hard. Hit it hard between gear changes and the front wheel just keeps on popping up. Did someone say fun?

The seat is thin and feels quite hard yet soft enough. I am seriously trying hard to find big things wrong with it so far.

The shrouds around the tank kind of force you into position on the seat but you can push back and sit up higher or slide up the seat onto the tank a bit and then the slip stream kind of pushes you into a pocket.

The suspension feels amazing, I flew over a speed hump and it barely noticed it, chewed up some rough surfaces down back streets and is soft yet fully reassuring that you can dip into a roundabout at ridiculous speeds and feel quite sure that you will have enough power to exit the other side without a worry. The Dorsoduro makes me feel confident and has the power in all the right places. What a great tone they have squeezed out of the stock pipes. Hard and tight sounding but cracking and fierce without being all Harley like and not barky raspy like it's KTM rival.

If you are into this kind of bike, or have never ridden a big super motard before, I urge you to go and check this wicked machine out. It's a stack cheaper than the Ducati and way better to look at and ride than the KTM and goes like an absolute rocket.

I know one thing for sure. You'll totally want one.

Priced at R129 990.00 - Incl. 14% VAT

EAST COAST MOTORCYCLES
Tel: (031) 566 3024
10 Meridian Drive, Umhlanga Ridge