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So why would *ADVMoto* magazine want to report on a bike that really hasn't changed in the last six years? Well, the fine folks at KTM North America wanted us to live with the big enduro for the summer (I love my job). Not having spent much time with the brand in the past, other than a few, smaller CC off-road KTMs, I was excited to get some seat time on the 990. After racking up a few miles on the bike, I can tell you that it's been a "Summer of Love."

I was pleasantly surprised that there were so few quirks to become accustomed to. The hardest was the sensitive throttle input—mostly due to fuel injection. What I found worked best was making slow, smooth wrist movements. This technique seemed to mellow the on/off feeling the throttle delivered. The other minor quirk was gear selection—if you ride in too high of a gear there's a lot of drive chain noise. But riding in a lower gear kept the tach in check and

noise was decreased noticeably. After I'd become comfortable with these minor quirks, it was clear that the 990 is pretty close to one of the best purpose-built adventure bikes I have ever had the pleasure to ride.

Power comes from the infamous LC8 75° V-twin engine that produces around 105 HP and 74 ft. lbs. of torque @ 6750 rpm. Suspension is plush with customizable settings for different terrains and riding styles. And an added bonus is the large preload adjustment knob on the rear shock, which comes in handy for riding two up, or loaded with gear (no need for aftermarket upgrades).

Now that we have some of the particulars out of the way, let the farkling begin! The crew at *ADVMoto* is always looking for ways to improve your daily adventure bikes, so we added a few things to make this great motorcycle even better.

KTM 990 ADVENTURE

by Dan DiMaio
Photos by Carl Parker

MAKING A BETTER ORANGE



SADDLEMEN ADVENTURE TRACK SEAT

The stock seat on the 990 isn't bad by any means; we were just looking for a little more comfort for those longer rides, and maybe a little more room for us vertically-challenged riders. The Saddlemen Adventure Track seat is available in a two inch lower version which allows for a little more foot on the ground. Although welcome on street, the benefits of putting your feet on the ground are huge for off-pavement adventuring, and we'd bet there are more than a few riders who would appreciate the extra two inches.

Saddlemen's hybrid design combines exclusive saddle gel interior, progressive density foam, and a channel down the middle to provide adventure riders with unparalleled comfort and control. Integrated bag/cargo mounting points on the pillion is a nice touch and provides additional tie-down points for any luggage you may need to bring along. With all these features, the only downside to the saddle is the micro-fiber suede which covers the main seating area. When this portion of the seat gets wet, it takes awhile to dry out. Replacing that area with vinyl or leather would probably be just as comfortable and drier to boot. Despite this slightly annoying feature, there's no doubt the overall design and reduced saddle height makes living with the 990 not only more comfortable, but safer and generally more fun.





TWISTED THROTTLE

provided a few pieces of equipment to prevent being stranded on the side of the trail. We installed a SW-Motech aluminum skid/engine guard. This particular unit is constructed of a 4mm aluminum base, and 3mm sides. Where the base plates and side plates overlap, it forms a riveted 7mm-thick rail for extra rigidity. Side protectors wrap around the engine block to provide both bottom and side protection. The unit was a breeze to install and is available in brushed bare aluminum or durable

The crew at Twisted Throttle wanted to make sure we were protected for our off-pavement adventures and

black powder coated finishes. The peace-of-mind that you are protected makes it worth the extra effort.

An area most of us overlook is the fragile plastic headlight cover. Not only is it susceptible to hazing from road blasting, it is also front and center to receive roost from your riding buddies when off pavement. We installed a product called the "Light Saver." It's a 30mm thick film that covers your headlight unit in an optical quality, double-polished polyvinyl film that protects the unit from roost and road debris.

The SW-Motech auxiliary light mounts make sure the 990 can pack the lumens needed for evening adventure riding. The solid construction and relatively simple installation are big bonuses to this custom light rail and are perfect for their Denali series lamps.

FASTWAY ADVENTURE PEGS BY PROMOTO BILLET

You have to admit that most manufactures often don't pay much attention to the footpegs they hang on their machines. The stock units that come on the 990 are way too small for any type of off-pavement adventuring. We picked up a set of these beautifully-crafted billet aluminum gems. The pegs measure an impressive 2.25" front to back, 4.75" wide while most others are around 2" front to back and 3" wide. The added length gives you more confidence when the terrain gets rough, and the screw-in cleats have incredible traction with the boot. A removable rubber pad would have been a nice touch at this price point for riders who could use extra dampening for extended riding. The patented adjustable collars make it easy to run them in the "standard" or "low boy" positions on most bikes, giving the rider more room for bulky boots, or longer legs. All in all, the Fastway Adventure pegs are a well-made, comfortable and confidence inspiring upgrade for any 990.





BAJA DESIGNS SQUADRON LED LAMP

We all know that you can't expect much from your stock lighting and the KTM is no exception. With so many lighting options available, *ADV Moto* decided to try out the Baja Designs Squadron LED units.

Installation was a breeze with the optional wiring harness and a SW-Motech lamp mount from Twisted Throttle. Once mounted, all I can say is, "WOW!" These babies draw a hefty (for LED) 44 watts per unit but crank out a whopping 3600 lumens of "spotting deer through trees" power.

While out testing in normal traffic, if you angle them slightly down, you can ride with them on all the time, without getting the annoying high beam flash from on-coming traffic. The light spread is outstanding even with the lights aimed straight ahead. If you do a lot of night riding, I highly recommend checking out all the lighting options available in the market place. While the Baja Designs are incredible units, they are on the high end of the price spectrum, but well worth the money if you want extra daytime visibility and safer evening back road riding.



BLACK DOG CYCLE WORKS (BDCW)

The 990 likes to run at the top of the temperature gauge's range, especially if you get caught in stop and go traffic. Also, if you do a lot of slower off-pavement technical riding, this is a must-add upgrade. We installed the BDCW auxiliary fan kit and no longer did we have to worry about rising temperature issues and turning off the bike at stoplights. Installation was fairly straightforward and didn't take much more than an hour. I do, however, recommend removing both tanks for installation to make it easier to find the fan wire.

Another nifty add-on from BDCW is the A990 crash bar bags. These little gems give you additional storage for tools and other items you might not use on a regular basis. They sit relatively low on the bike and are made from heavy-duty durable 1680 polyester denier ballistic with heavy coating. The inside of the bags are light in color to make finding your goodies a lot easier. Two bags included in set, one for each side.

Lastly, we wanted to try out the ultra-heavy-duty skid plate for our more hardcore off-pavement adventures. BDCW's innovative design utilizes two steel supports on the front and back to brace the skid plate from hard impacts that would normally rip off the stock skid plate, or other aftermarket skid plates, that utilize only the four rubber shear bolts for mounting to the bike. If you plan on spending more time off-road with the 990, there's no doubt the extra protection of this model is worth the added weight.



CONCLUSION

Several thousand miles later, and an oil change at our local KTM dealer, MFI, Inc., we agree the KTM 990 is a great machine right off the showroom floor and enjoyed living with it every day. As nice as it is, with a few add-ons you can make this bike nearly bullet-proof, more comfortable and practical for your everyday adventures. Better still, the 990 proves itself to be the most off-road capable liter class adventure bike still on the market. With the 990's replacement on the horizon, it may be difficult to improve on this already very capable steed. We look forward to seeing how well the 990 stacks up against the new KTM 1190 Adventure... now that's some tasty orange!



PARTS LIST

Twisted Throttle	TwistedThrottle.com
SW-Motech skid plate	\$215.99
Light Saver headlight film	\$44.00
SW-Motech KTM990 auxiliary light mount	\$55.00
Baja Designs	BajaDesigns.com
Squadron LED lamp	\$344.95
Universal wiring harness	\$57.95

Black Dog Cycle Works	BlackDogCW.com
Ultra-heavy-duty skid plate	\$349.00
Kickstand relocation kit	\$89.95
Auxiliary secondary fan kit	\$149.95
A990 crash bar bags	\$129.00
Fastway by ProMoto Billet:	ProMotoBillet.com
Adventure footpegs	\$349.95
Saddlemen	Saddlemen.com
Adventure Track low-profile seat	\$399.95