



Without proper guarding, rocks like these can end your day and cause costly repairs.

Have You Considered Your Vulnerabilities? Readying Your Bike for Adventure

by Chris Patterson | Founder, *TerraMoto Outfitters*



Standing on the pegs, knees slightly bent and eyes looking up as your off-road instructor taught, you enter one of the tough parts of the map you researched months ago for your adventure of a lifetime; twelve weeks through Central and South America. As you keep your speed up in second gear, jagged rocks begin to appear in your path. With no time to change course or slow, your front tire rolls over one of the rocks. The tire clears it fine, but in an instant your stock "adventure" skid plate has become twisted aluminum scrap-metal and, worse, oil drips begin to appear below you.

On the Skids

You don't have to be midway through the Darien Gap of Central America for this scenario to be catastrophic. Even a day ride on your favorite local forest trail can end in disappointment without proper protection for you and your moto. For now, we'll focus on your bike, since most of us seem to spend more money protecting that invest-

ment than our own body. One of the most vulnerable areas of a motorcycle scaling rocks and roots is the bottom and front of the engine just aft of the front tire. Most adventure bikes come with a stock skid plate, all of which may look the part but have varying levels of uselessness when tire hits trail.

If you are going to ride off-road, and especially if you like to push the limits, then you need appropriate protection for your adventure bike. No matter whether you are on a BMW, KTM, Yamaha or other brand bike, you would do well to remove whatever skid plate is mounted currently. While under there, examine the engine case. Looks exposed doesn't it? It doesn't take much to imagine a blow from a rock cracking the engine block and your ride is done and you are in for a costly repair.

Meeting the Challenge

While researching skid plates we developed our necessary characteristics:

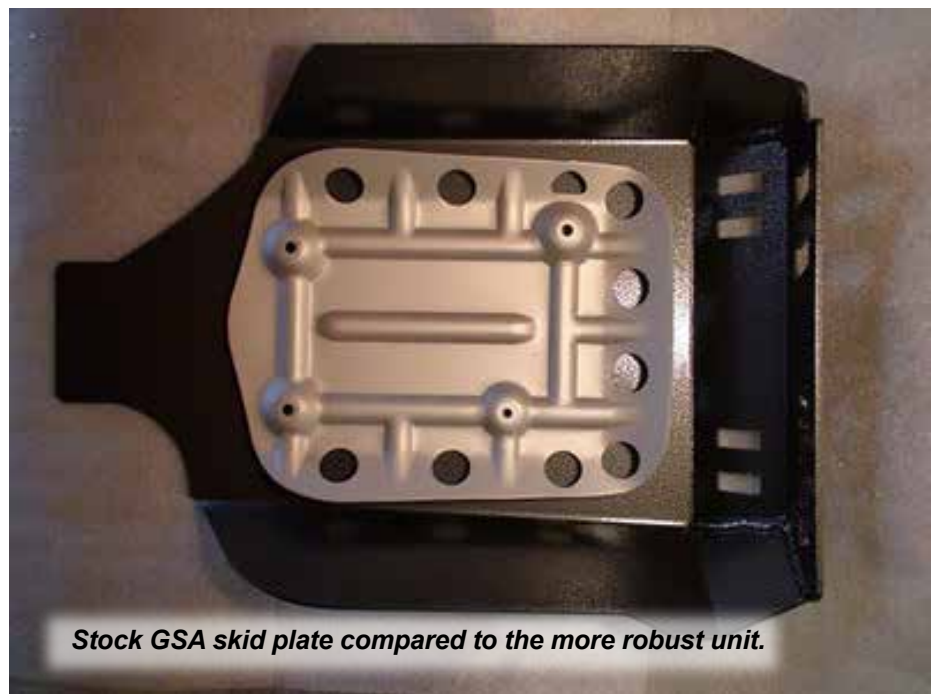


Mounted on the BMW GS Adventure.

with little opportunity to get hung up on a root or rock. Rubber “Shok Bloks” free float between the plate and engine. These offer much better impact absorption than the stock rubber *BMW* shear bolts which are threaded into the engine block. The front of the skid plate is even wide enough to offer protection for the front part of the *GSA*’s exhaust pipes.

1. It must feel substantial and be made of steel. No cosmetic aluminum armor is up to the task.
2. Mounting to the motorcycle’s frame rather than the engine block itself reduces the potential for damage.
3. A smooth surface allows the skid plate and the heavy adventure bike to slide over rocks and logs. Cool looking cutouts simply have a better chance of catching on whatever terrain it is you are trying to cross.
4. Finally, it must come from a company with good customer service.

There are other skid plates out there from very reputable manufacturers, which offer great protection. However, we found only one which offers the heavy, industrial plate-steel level of armor we prefer for our \$20,000+



Stock GSA skid plate compared to the more robust unit.

One stood out among all others in our search, the **Black Dog Cycle Works Skid Plate**. This is one heavy, industrial looking piece of kit. At 11 pounds for the skid plate and the center stand guard, it made the stock *BMW GSA* skid plate feel like an aluminum pie tin. Stoutly constructed in the USA, this rugged piece of metal features excellent construction with a thick, durable, good looking powder coat finish. No drain holes here, the undersurface is solid and smooth

investment. This is one skid plate you won’t be carrying home bungeed to the rear seat at the end of the day.s

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Also see: BlackDogCW.com