

END OF AN ADVENTURE

Time to say farewell to one of our favourites, the KTM 990 Adventure R



■ Gravel road warning? You've gotta be kidding!

STORY: GREG REYNOLDS

All too soon the time has come to hand back the keys to the KTM 990 Adventure R. I was really getting into the big adventure-tourer and I have been revelling in its versatility. This bike can open a whole new world of roads and fun to be had on a motorcycle. It is in its element on all types of dirt roads, particularly when fitted with knobbies.

Without the luggage system it can be ridden like a giant dirt bike with heaps of power and traction. You do have to treat it with respect though, because there is more than enough power to bite you badly if you get too loose. With the luggage system fitted it's a bit more "steady as she goes" due to the extra weight.

On the bitumen it is a great tourer, capable of very rapid progress. The 21-inch front wheel and long travel suspension

↓ The relocation kit is so clever you'd never really know it was there until you look closely.



just lap up the bumps, providing a well-controlled and comfy ride all-round. The suspension is well up to the task and with the big fairing protecting you, it's very easy to clock up some serious kays on the Adventure R. We managed 18,000km in our stint with the big KTM.

Overall the handling is very good. The steering is obviously slow by road bike standards, but that only makes the KTM feel solid when riding. That stability increases as the corners open up. The front brakes are excellent, with enough bite for spirited road riding, and enough feel for the dirt. The rear was OK on the road but quite touchy in the loose stuff.

Sixth gear is very tall, pulling 26km/h per 1000rpm. This means that from 100km/h to 130km/h you are doing between 4000 and 5000rpm. That probably explains why I got a miserly 5.6L/100km on one transport stage. Fuel consumption was usually within a whisker of 6.0L/100km. My worst was 7.5 but I was really playing hard. The reserve light rarely came on with less than 260km on the trip meter.

The fairing was great at all practical road speeds. It felt like it was pushing a lot of wind when the speed got way up, but you expect that on this style of bike. I would have liked a slightly lower screen or an electronically adjustable one, but you can't have everything.

The luggage system is clearly excellent for touring and the headlights are well up to the task. Low beam has good spread, with high beam adding great penetration. I guess the odd flash from oncoming cars is a small price to pay for effective lighting.

We added a few accessories to the Adventure R to either dress it up or improve it in some way. These have all been really successful and we thank the distributors for their generosity. I have

◀ Black Dog's bash plate is unbreakably solid and the relocated sidestand mount is good insurance.

METZELER KAROO TYRES

After 8000km on the Pirelli Scorpions we decided to fit a set of Metzeler Karoo 2 knobby tyres to the KTM to give it back its full capability in the dirt. They provided great grip, bite and traction in everything from soft to sloppy to hardpack.

There was pretty good grip on the bitumen, too, but unfortunately when you push them much over 120km/h on

the road they start to wear fairly quickly. I only managed to eke 4000km out of them but less than 1000km of that was dirt. I probably played a little too much because the rear is now totally bald in the centre.

I would recommend them to anyone whose riding is biased towards the dirt. If you treat the tar like a transport stage, they should provide much better life. A worthy addition to any adventure bike.

BLACK DOG CYCLE WORKS GEAR

Both the Black Dog sidestand relocating kit and sump guard are top-shelf additions to the KTM. There was a bit of a whisper that snagging the sidestand could cause it to damage the crankcase, to which it is directly mounted.

Black Dog provides a \$99 remote mount, which retains the original stand angle. If the stand sustains major damage, the mount would break rather than the cases.

The sump guard, which sells for \$366, looks good and works a treat in heavy-going and rough country.

Both these products are high-quality items. For more info see www.motorcycleadventure.com.au or call (07) 3139 0387.

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detailed the Black Dog gear and the Metzeler Karoo tyres elsewhere and the aluminium radiator guard was a winner — much stronger, with better flow and cooling. Likewise, the protective tank film is a no brainer at \$32 and the Termignoni pipes are glorious. The end result is a tough-looking, specced-up beast that will go anywhere.

How could I sign off on the big V-twin without mentioning that wonderful engine. It has enough power to deal with any road situation and enough torque and lowdown punch to plonk through mud or sand with ease. It feels a bit more raw and raucous in its power delivery than something like a Ducati, but I really liked that in a bike such as this. The response is instant and the growl from the Termis when you crack the throttle open is absolute music.

In my time with the 990 Adventure R it never occurred to me that what I needed was more power. It makes me wonder what the new 1190 will be like. We mightn't need the extra power, but we will definitely take it! 