



SERIOUS ADVENTURE

Overland Journal Evaluates the New KTM 1190 Adventure R

Words by Scott Brady | Published on May 6th, 2014

“The *KTM* sets the new standard for breadth of capability, being violently fast on the pavement, while still besting everything in this test on the trail.”



The launch of the new *KTM 1190 Adventure R* established a new benchmark of performance for the entire segment, while also improving touring comfort and refinement. *Overland Journal* had the opportunity



to test an early production unit owned by **Black Dog Cycle Works** in Idaho. We rode the 1190 in both Death Valley and in the mountains of central Arizona, evaluating the performance of the bike and the long

list of aftermarket accessories installed. Our primary objective was to compare the *KTM* against other offerings in the segment, including the *BMW 1200GS*, *Triumph 1200 Explorer* and the *Yamaha Super Tenere*. The results of that test are available in the spring issue of *Overland Journal*.



The new cockpit is comprehensive and easy to see in all conditions. Navigating menus is relatively intuitive, our only complaint being that setting needs to be reset with each ignition restart.

Kurt and Martha Forgét are both passionate adventure riders, with an emphasis on the more technical uses of these bikes. As a result, their product design favors extreme duty, their skid plates earning full “bash plate”

status, intended to survive all but the most insane impacts. Their other products are extensive, but primarily focus on ergonomics, lighting and luggage.

This *1190 KTM* is the most exciting adventure motorcycle we have ever tested, nearly matching a *Ducati Multistrada* for street performance, while thoroughly outrunning everything else over 800cc in the dirt. *KTM* has set the gold standard for dirt-oriented adventure motorcycles since its 1998 launch of the venerated *640* and subsequent *950*. These bikes were unapologetic in their intent, which was to maximize technical terrain performance while reserving just enough to allow for stability and basic comfort on the pavement. The new *1190 Adventure R*, with its advanced traction control, ABS, Motorcycle Stability Control (MSC), and a 150-horsepower twin, pushes the limits of technology, power, and design, and honors its heritage.

On Road

With the high-revving twin engine launching the bike from 0 to 60 mph in 2.8 seconds (1/4-mile in 10.6 seconds), the *KTM 1190* is violently fast. This is nearing superbike territory, and the ample power



makes it a thrill to ride from trailhead to trailhead. The redesigned seat is the most notable comfort improvement over the outgoing 990; heaven compared to previous implement of torture. Despite these improvements, it lacks cruise control and implements a chain for final drive, and ranked in the bottom third of the group for touring comfort. However, we are not interested in the most comfortable” bike.

On Trail

The *KTM* dominated in the dirt. Systems worked in concert to propel the 1190 through sand, up steep

Modifications

For protection, **Black Dog Cycle Works (BDCW)** started with their new extreme-duty skid plate that also integrates side stand relocation. Moving the side stand is critical to protecting the motor casting from damage. The skid plate is a serious piece of kit, and looks as suitable for taking a hit from an IED as it is a rock. Additional protection comes from the full-coverage radiator guard. Addressing ergonomics and control, wide **BDCW** platform pegs were fitted and significantly improve leverage in technical terrain and reduce pressure on the base of the foot. Standing comfort was also improved with a 40mm bar riser.



A skid plate made to take serious abuse.

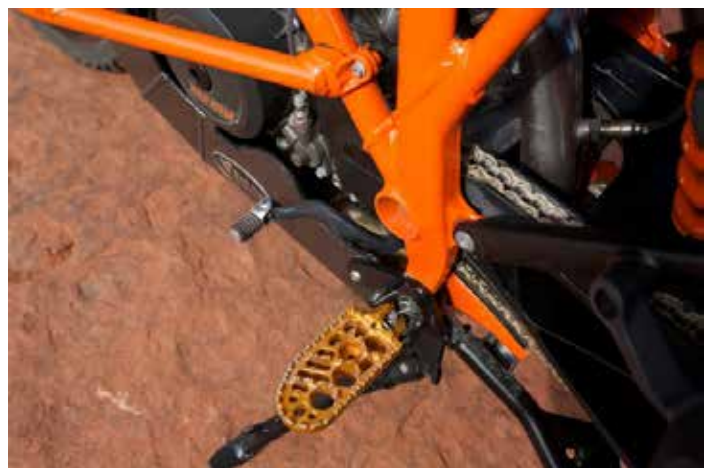
To illuminate the trail and improve safety on the roads, Kurt installed a 6” *Rigid SR2* LED light on their **BDCW** fork light mount and additional *Rigid D2* LED lights with amber covers on the engine bars. For luggage, **Black Dog** exclusively uses *Enduristan* equipment, including the 25 tank bag and a pair of *Enduristan Monsoon2* saddlebags mounted to *Hepco-Becker*

climbs, and over rock gardens and ledges like a much smaller bike. The 21-inch front wheel, 9 inches of well-tuned suspension travel, and lighter weight (70 pounds less than the *Super Ténéré*) allowed it to clear obstacles that knocked other bikes off line. Another improvement is better steering lock for tighter turning. Traction control, which includes Sport, Street, and Offroad modes, is effective and on par with that of the 1200GS, and the ABS Offroad mode provided the best dirt performance. The only annoyance was the need to turn everything off with each key cycle.

pannier frames. I like the *Enduristan* bags for their clean design and durable construction. Wrapping up the modifications is a *Hepco-Becker* headlight guard, a *Warn XT17* mounted to the **BDCW** multi-function rear rack, *Doubletake* mirrors and a set of *Karoo 3* tires.



The rear of the plate protects the exhaust and center stand.



The wide pegs are a critical addition for technical terrain, allowing greater leverage and reduced foot pressure.



The 6" Rigid LED made night riding an easy affair, aided by the light turning with the front fork.



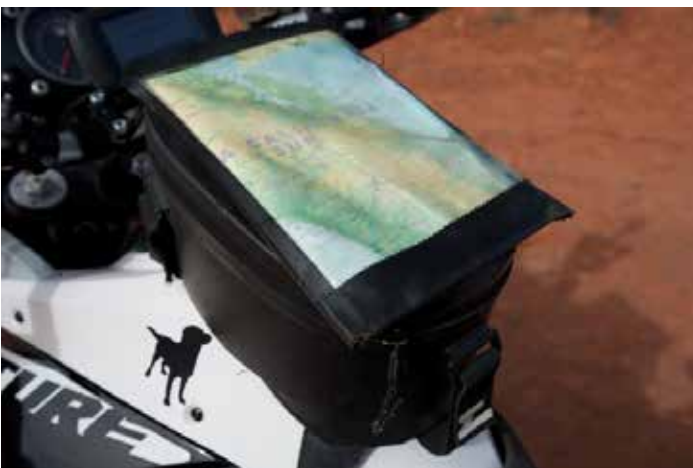
The rear rack runs far back enough to allow a winch mount and still fit a generous top bag.



The D2 light provide wide coverage and improved road safety.



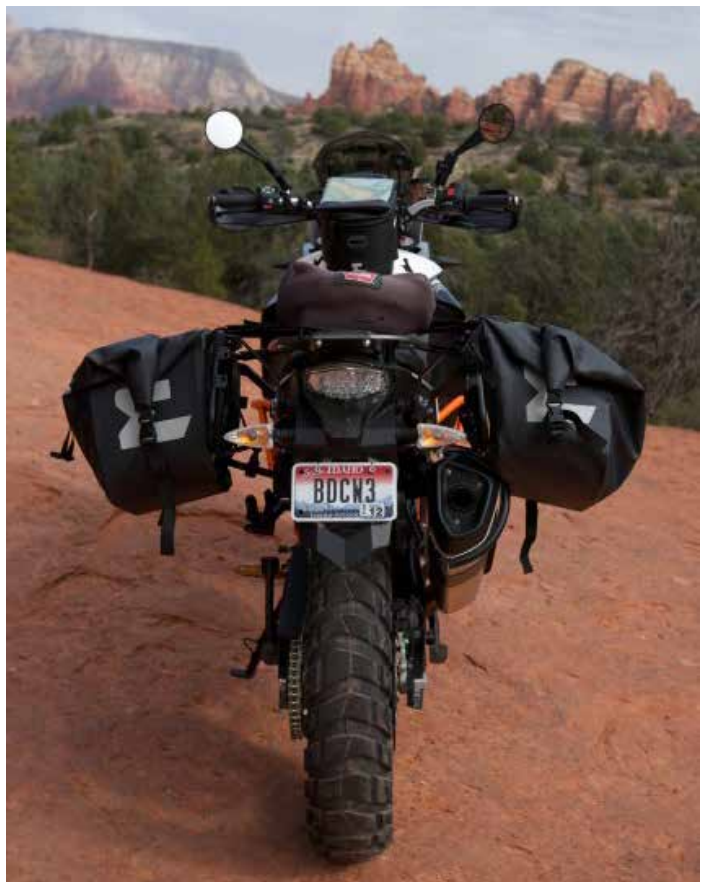
I thought a motorcycle winch was silly until I spent two hours digging a GSA out of the snow....



My favorite tank bag, the Enduristan. Big map pocket and sturdy structure makes for a perfect camera case.



Strong and foldable, these Doubletake mirrors are a wise modification for trail use.



In Closing

With an emphasis on performance and safety, the *KTM 1190 Adventure R* is exactly what an overland motorcycle should be. It is fast on the road, highly competent in the dirt, and is the first adventure motorcycle with MSC (Motorcycle Stability Control). Though it's a little unruly on the pavement, the premium suspension, traction control, multi-mode ABS, power, and comfort in the dirt make up for it. Fuel economy, observed at 48 mpg (middle of the pack but an improvement over the *990*) and the service interval extended to 9,000-plus miles. It was the highest performing bike in this test and the one most capable

of taking on anything adventure travel can send its way.

BlackDogCW.com

KTM.com

Pros:

- Class-leading dirt performance
- Class-leading street performance
- Class-leading electronics

Cons:

- Lacks touring refinement
- ABS and traction control revert when key turned off
- Lacks classic KTM rally styling



Serious Adventure

Published by Scott Brady on May 6th, 2014

About the Author: Scott Brady

Scott is the publisher and founder of *Expedition Portal* and the co-founder of *Overland Journal*. His travels by 4WD and adventure motorcycle span all seven continents, including being part of the first American team to cross Antarctica (with *Expeditions 7*). Scott has circumnavigated the globe overland three times and was the first American driver to win the *Outback Challenge*. He lives in Prescott, Arizona.