

Motorcycle Consumer NEWS

Volume 33
 Number 9
 September 2002
 \$7.00

**TRIUMPH
 TIGER 955I**



11

**APRILIA
 CAPONORD**



OPEN-CLASS DUAL-SPORT COMPARISON

**BMW
 R1150GS
 ADVENTURE**



**SUZUKI
 V-STROM**



DAVE SEARLE

- 24 Motorcycle Lifts—**
 Choosing the right one for you
and your bike
- 28 Keith Code's California
 Superbike School—**
 Two days and 5000 corners
- 32 Eastwood Polisher—**
 A restorer's dream for cleaning
 and polishing rusty hardware
- 32 GIVI Top Box for the
 BMW R1150RT—**
 A bargain for Beemerphiles
- 33 Great Destinations—**
 Cardin's Riverside Grill

- 34 Laguna Seca World
 Superbike Weekend—**The
 Sturgis of the sportbike crowd
- 36 MotorSport MS-1 Trailer—**
 A neat teeter-totter bike toter
- 37 Is Your Motorcycle Trailer
 Legal... and Safe?—**
 The little-known, latest DOT
 requirements for trailers
- 38 Motorcycle Design—**
 Under The Influence
- 48 Zena Alarm Lock—**Never get
 caught driving away with your
 disc lock attached again

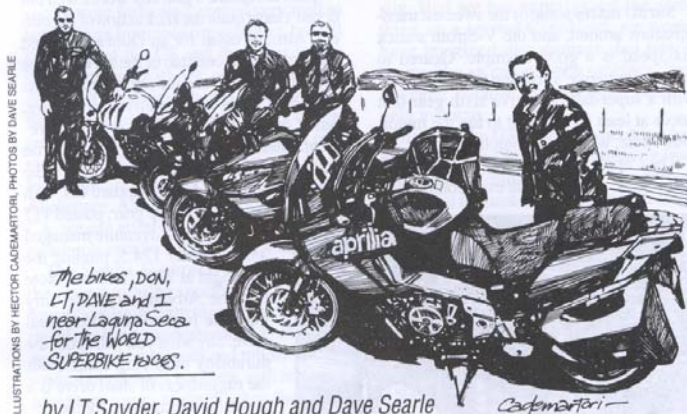
Departments

- Open Road2
- Letters3
- M/C Bulletins6
- Downtime Files.....8
- World Motorcycling10
- Mental Motorcycling.....39
Dirty Thoughts
- Proficient Motorcycling ...40
Rain Dance
- What's Happening.....43
- Street Strategy46
- Contact Patch.....47
- Innovation of the Month ...48
The Revolutionizer

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OPEN-CLASS DUAL-SPORT SHOWDOWN

Triumph vs Aprilia vs BMW vs Suzuki



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HECTOR CADEMARTORI, PHOTOS BY DAVE SEARLE

The bikes, Don, LT, Dave and I near Laguna Seca for the World Superbike races.

by LT Snyder, David Hough and Dave Searle

THE PARIS-DAKAR race can be credited with creating the modern adventure-touring class of motorcycles. The grueling off-road event, currently 17 days over 6500 miles, made heroes of its participants, and the almost grotesque proportions of the bikes, with their enormous gas tanks and long-travel suspensions, inspired the fantasies of motorcyclists world-wide—but particularly in Europe. As a proving ground for durability, a win in the Dakar is the ultimate Gold Medal for a manufacturer, whether it be car, truck or motorcycle. BMW, Honda, Yamaha and KTM have all built a strong following based on their success in the event.

BMW's R80GS could rightfully be considered the original adventure-tourer. First sold in 1981, three years after the inception of the P-D Rally, the GS soon became the globe-trotters' favorite ride, just ask our own Dr. Gregory Frazier. And, if current trends continue, the adventure-tourer will supplant the conventional sport-tourer in world-wide sales. The R1150GS is already Germany's most popular bike, and the GS in its large and small forms combined is BMW's best seller in America.

To sort the real adventure-tourers from the pretenders, our test route ranged from the rush-hour LA freeways to the coastal mountains, to dirt across dry Soda Lake, through the inland valleys to God's own motorcycle roller coaster, the Nacimiento-Ferguson Road over the mountains to the Pacific Coast Highway and Monterey,

returning down PCH's fabulous twisties. The weather challenged the bikes and riders with some extremes of its own, from a heat wave across Soda Lake with temps near 120°, to cold, dense fog on PCH through Big Sur that had us shivering.

The Contenders

Although the U.S. has received only a few of the various bikes built to appeal to the European P-D enthusiast, the BMW GS has been continuously available to Americans and has continued to evolve. The new 2002 R1150GS Adventure (see our First Impression, May 2002) takes the concept to an extreme. Its knobby tires are ready for the dirt, and its 7.9 gal. fuel capacity gives it a giant 363-mile range. While its air-cooled motor trades performance for simplicity, it also gets the best gas mileage (averaging 46.0 over the same route as the others). Despite being the heaviest, at 613.5 lbs., its handling benefits tremendously from BMW's unique Telelever forks and Paralever shaft drive system, and it is the only bike here with ABS, a centerstand and heated grips. It's also very expensive, base priced at \$15,200.

Triumph's Tiger 955i, now in its third iteration (upgraded in 2001), was our pick over the standard R1150GS as the best combination of performance and value (priced at \$10,899). Its water-cooled triple has great driveability, and it handles well by virtue of its 542.5-lb. weight—fully 71 lbs. less than the GS Adventure. With a 6.1 gal. fuel

tank, it has a range of 274 miles (averaging 44.9 mpg).

However, competition for the crown of America's best adventure-tourer really heated up this year when two more contenders assaulted the U.S. market. The Aprilia CapoNord, priced competitively with the Tiger at \$10,999, has finally arrived from Italy after its introduction at the Inter-mot show in 2000. Powered by a torqued-up version of Aprilia's 60°, four-valve V-twin, it sports an aluminum chassis and robust long-travel suspension. Slightly lighter (568 lbs.) and more powerful than the Tiger, it also carries more fuel, 6.6 gals., for a 292-mile range (at 44.3 mpg), and has a carrying capacity of 376 lbs.

But the surprise is Suzuki's DL1000 V-Strom, which signals that the Japanese are once again ready to test the market for adventure-tourers after the Honda XL600V Transalp (1989-'90) and Yamaha 850 TDM (1992-'93) failed to gain a foothold here. Powered by a re-tuned version of the 90° V-twin that powered the TL1000S and R-models, it also has an alloy chassis but leans in a sportier direction, with shorter suspension travel and a smallish (for this group) 5.8 gal. tank, good for a 253-mile range (at 43.7 mpg, the lowest). It's the lightest weight, 523 lbs. wet, most powerful, its carrying capacity is the highest, 442lbs., and, best of all, it's the least expensive at just \$8899. If the GS Adventure is one extreme, the V-Strom is the other, closer to the long-legged sportbike concept of Ducati's upcoming Multistrada than a two-wheeled HUMVEE.

Engines

Suzuki V-Strom 1st, Aprilia CapoNord 2nd, Triumph Tiger 3rd, BMW R1150GS Adventure 4th.

While the 996cc V-Strom motor has been significantly detuned from its TL1000R configuration, with smaller intake valves (36 vs. 40mm) and milder cam timing, trading more than 20 hp off the top for better gas mileage and a bit more torque below 6400 rpm, it still has the highest horsepower here (89.2 hp @ 8000 rpm and 65.6 lbs. ft. at 6250). It also runs very smoothly, making it a pleasant travelling companion, and its underseat exhaust provides more sensory stimulation than the others. But it also has an abrupt on-off throttle response despite its trick GSX-R-style dual butterfly fuel injection, and it refuses to run smoothly much below 4000 rpm, making lugging noises if you do. Still, in the lightweight V-Strom, the 996cc, 4-valve V-twin was

Model Comparison

quick, producing an 11.56 sec. ¼-mile @ 114.1 mph. It turns 3900 rpm at a true 65 mph (its optimistic speedo indicates 65 at only 59 mph/3550 rpm).

The CapoNord also edged the Tiger, our previous class (of-two) performance champ, with an 11.80 sec. ¼-mile @ 111.62 mph. Its 60°, 998cc, V-twin makes 82.7 hp @ 8250 rpm and 59.2 lb. ft. @ 6500. Its fuel injection, from Sagem (same as the Tiger) is flawless and very responsive. Actually the smoothest running engine, its only sensory flaw was a noticeable clatter, probably generated by the counterbalancer located in the rear cylinder head. But, with earplugs in place, the noise disappears and the engine is very satisfying. The CapoNord also spins 3900 rpm at a true 65 mph (exactly what the speedo indicates) but doesn't struggle when pulling from even lower speeds; it's more flexible than the Suzuki.

Now relegated to third place, the Tiger makes 80.3 hp @ 8000 rpm and 57.3 lb. ft. at 5000. The Triumph's 955cc triple is also a very engaging powerplant, with excellent throttle response and a strong torque curve from down low in the rpm range. It clips a 12.06 sec. ¼-mile @ 108.4 mph, but doesn't feel slower than the CapoNord in normal use. Part of its eagerness stems from its shorter gearing. With the highest redline (9500), the Tiger uses more rpm than the others, cruising a true 65 mph at a busy 4860 rpm in top gear. Speedo error is minimal, indicating 65 mph at a true 63.5 mph.

While the R1150GS Adventure's larger 1130cc, opposed twin is last for horsepower, 75.0, it makes the most torque, 69.9 @ 5500, and churns along in sixth at a true 65 mph at 3960 rpm. But it equals the V-Strom in at least one area, speedometer error—an actual 59.0 at an indicated 65 mph. While the motor makes strong torque from 3000–6500 rpm, keeping it where it's happiest requires frequent shifting. Although it is redlined at 7000, it will pull 8000 before the limiter intervenes. Fitted with a lower first gear, its acceleration is improved over the standard GS, its ¼-mile performance going from 12.51 sec. @ 103.78 mph to 12.33 secs. @ 105.51 mph despite gaining 32.5 lbs. with its extra equipment and larger gas tank. (Note: wet weight figure includes optional headlight guard, fog lights, cylinder head protectors and bag mounts). However, what surprised us all was how narrow the engine's powerband actually is in comparison to the others. Should you let it drop below 3000 rpm, it

seems to fall flat. But, we are happy to report that we didn't notice any significant fuel injection surging this time.

Transmission

Suzuki V-Strom 1st, Triumph Tiger 2nd, Aprilia CapoNord 3rd, BMW R1150GS Adventure 4th.

Suzuki makes some of the sweetest transmissions around, and the V-Strom's slick six-speed is a good example. Geared to reduce the engine's cruising thirst, it's fitted with a super-tall overdrive sixth gear that needs at least 65 mph not to lug the motor. Otherwise, we had no complaints.

The Capo's gearbox gives plenty of pull in low gear, and one tester even complained

rather than mechanical: The bulge of the clutch housing on the right side forces the rider's boot wide, so that to access the stubby shift pedal, the rider must twist his/her ankle, pigeon-toed. Continual shifting, as on long twisty descents, will tire the rider's knee and ankle.

The Adventure's gearbox works well but doesn't have quite the slick action of the others. Also, as usual for an Oilhead, it often takes more than one stab of the toe to engage first from neutral, and the dry clutch protests drag race starts with smelly overheating, but it can spin the knobby on the pavement. Interestingly, the shorter sixth gear on the Adventure significantly improves the machine's top speed. The standard GS, with its overdrive top gear, posted 117 mph, but the Adventure managed a much faster 124.5, pinning the tach right at 7000 (redline). Note that the Adventure is the only machine here to use shaft final drive. Say what you will about the durability of O-ring chains, but the ruggedness of shaft drive is a powerful selling point for the GS.

Suspension

BMW R1150 GS Adventure First, Triumph Tiger Second, Aprilia CapoNord Third, Suzuki V-Strom Fourth.

Keep in mind that the suspensions are rated here based on their rough road capability, something required by the designation "adventure-tourer." The BMW wins by virtue of its Telelever front and Paralever rear ends. Without the dive-cancelling Telelever forks, such a tall, heavy machine would plunge on the brakes like a drunken sailor, but instead it acts like a lightweight. Plus, all its competitors have copied BMW's handy external rear preload adjusting knob. Blessed with almost another inch of travel compared to the standard GS, the Adventure brings 8.4" front and 8.8" rear travel to the game, to gobble nasty surfaces without complaint. For more aggressive riding, just increase the preload a notch on the front, and balance the rear preload on the fly to convert the beast from Barca-lounger to canyon carver.

None of the other adventure tourers in our comparison had adjustable front suspension. While all of our test bikes possessed preload and rebound adjustability on their rear suspensions, the front is no less vital in terms of need for tweaking.

Amongst the non-adjustable front suspension lot, the Tiger's 43mm forks were the most capable at soaking up road irregularities. Although they did display some sig-



BMW Adventure at the Cold Spring Tavern on Stagecoach Rd. (HWY 154) near Santa Barbara

cedemartini

first was too short. However, its top three gears are quite close, allowing you to choose exactly the right ratio for the speed of the curves, maximizing performance. The Capo's clutch feel is unusual, the product of a unique pneumatic power-assist. Although the effort is low, the take-up is curiously incremental, not smooth. This made our drag-race starts more difficult, and we also noticed that clutchless upshifts often resulted in what felt like a false neutral, allowing the engine to rev up before the clutch engaged sharply. Some testers didn't notice this as they always used the clutch. The advantage claimed for the design is that the clutch will prevent locking of the rear wheel when inadequate rpm has been used to compensate for a downshift; it's a racing-style design.

The Tiger's close-ratio tranny shifts sweetly and its throws are short. Combined with its peerless Sagem fuel injection system, nothing distracts from your control. Our only real complaint is ergonomic,

nificant braking dive, that's understandable given that the Tiger has the best braking numbers and longest front fork travel in our test, at 9" (a full 2.7" more than the V-Strom and .6" more than the GS). Still, its triple front springs combine a plush highway ride with good control in corners.

The Caponord's massive 50mm Marzocchi front forks also worked very well in buffering us from road irregularities, but fell just short of the GS and the Tiger in our tester's ratings. With 6.9" of travel, the forks displayed some dive when pushed hard, but were otherwise unfazed by a variety of surfaces. In the rear, a Sachs monoshock provides 7.3" of well-controlled travel. Used by the Hough/Searle tag team for a ride from Anchorage, Alaska, to our offices in Irvine, CA, we can attest that the Caponord's suspension is excellent for the long-haul.

The Suzuki V-Strom's suspension was the closest to being sportbike-like. The V-Strom's 43mm cartridge forks (6.3" of travel) and rear monoshock (6.4" of travel) worked well on smooth and mildly bumpy roads, but couldn't compete with its larger adventure-tourer siblings when the going got really rough. Still, because they didn't absorb so much, they tended to give more road feel, a fair trade-off in some minds.

Brakes

Triumph Tiger 1st, Suzuki V-Strom 2nd, Aprilia Caponord 3rd, BMW R1150GS Adventure 4th.

The BMW's brakes are the best equipment; opposed-piston calipers with ABS. Figure \$1000 of its higher price was spent here. The brakes on the rest of the machines are mid-shelf items, simple single-action calipers front and rear. The only real drawback to such a design is that the pads only retract from one side, leaving the opposite side in light contact to create a bit of drag.

Despite that, the Triumph Tiger's brakes produce excellent stopping distances. Its front calipers grip 310mm discs and a 285mm disc handles the rear. Their feel is linear and control is excellent, especially appreciated on slippery surfaces. The rider effort needed to halt the Tiger's bulk is greater than the GS, but less than the V-Strom or the Caponord. Best stopping distance from 60 mph: 115.9"—excellent.

The Suzuki V-Strom's binders are also very capable, but require more lever effort to stop the bike. Up front, it has dual 310mm front rotors (like the Tiger), while the rear 260mm is the smallest and least effective in our comparison. The Suzuki's are also the only brakes of the lot not to benefit from braided steel brake lines (or their equivalent on the Caponord). Best stopping distance from 60 mph: 118.4"—very good.

The Aprilia Caponord's brakes showed two personalities. When used at speed, the dual 300mm rotors and Brembo calipers seemed quite effective, hauling the Caponord down from speed progressively, if somewhat slowly. But, at lower speeds, we experienced an odd pulsing from the brakes that seemed to come and go in intensity. Had we not experienced the same thing on a second Caponord, we would have imagined disc damage, but now it seems like an engineering problem. Best stopping distance from 60 mph: 125.4"—only average.

Braking the GS from any speed is a low effort affair. Its dual 305mm floating front discs and 277mm rear disc arrangement give good feel and the braking power is linear. Best of all, the chassis remains settled thanks to the Telelever forks. Also, the rider has the ability to disable the ABS for loose/gravel roads with a switch that must be used before starting the engine. But, unfortunately, the knobby tires don't provide enough traction for short stops and most of our testing stops ranged from 150–155'. Even with the ABS deactivated, we couldn't do better, there just wasn't enough grip. Best stopping distance from 60mph: 145.7"—poor.

Because the tires play such a role in handling and braking distances, perhaps a word about the various wheel/rubber combinations is in order: The V-Strom's mag-style wheels look narrow, but are actually the same sizes as the Adventure's and Caponord's: 2.50/19", 4.00/17" front and back. The Tiger wears the same size front but a wider 4.25/17" rear rim. However, its wire wheels do not feature the clever through-the-flange spokes of the Aprilia or BMW, and thus it must use tubes in its tires, vulnerable to blowouts. The others are all tubeless. Tread-wise, the V-Strom's Bridgestone Trailwing rubber is more street-oriented than the Aprilia or Tiger, while the full knobbies on the BMW not only impair its handling and braking performance, but also send vibration through the chassis. We'd recommend you spoon these off and save them for when you really intend to go off-road, and fit the standard GS' Metzeler Enduro tires for improved braking distances and handling.

Handling

Suzuki V-Strom 1st, BMW R1150GS Adventure 2nd, Aprilia Caponord 3rd, Triumph Tiger 4th.

None of the adventure-tourers was deficient in the handling category, but for sheer cornering fun, the V-Strom wins. Its lighter weight, more street-oriented rubber, firmer suspension and solid chassis make it the sportiest of the lot. Even on smooth dirt

roads, it feels like an oversized motocross bike instead of a ponderous beast of burden like the others. Even its skinny handgrips feel like a sportbike's. However, we did notice significant crosswind susceptibility on the V-Strom; not alarming, just easy to sense through its precise steering.

But not everyone agreed. BMW's ingenious Telelever suspension keeps the Adventure in contention for the handling award, despite its heft. Once you've summoned the strength to lift it off its sidestand, the BMW feels light and easy to maneuver through traffic, deceptively quick through twisties, with the comfort of a living room couch on the highway. While the GS is the heaviest of the lot, it possesses the shortest wheelbase, 58.9"—a full 2" shorter than the Tiger and V-Strom (both at 61") and 2½" shorter than the Caponord (61.4"). Although the difference isn't obvious visually, the GS actually does feel much shorter on the road, and handles with quicker reflexes than its seemingly long and lazy competitors. On less radical rubber, it would have undoubtedly shown its heels to the pack. But it doesn't like fast transitions, when its long-travel forks wind up noticeably before the front tire follows the handlebars. We'd be looking for a fork brace if it were ours.

The Caponord also got high marks in the handling department. Its chassis is rock solid and its beefy 50mm Marzocchi forks are plush without removing too much road feel. Except for some moderate front end dive, the Caponord's suspension works well, and its relatively light weight makes it very enjoyable in the twisties.

The Triumph Tiger had a problem; its wheel alignment was off, the front wheel nearly an inch to the left of the rear. This gave it a curiously unequal response to lefts and rights (favoring lefts). Although we didn't notice any wobble or weave, the first Tiger we ever tested (Oct. '98) was also crooked, but the second was straight. A quality control problem? Also, its steering required a bit more effort than the others, particularly on fast transitions. But its excellent brakes, wide handlebars and slick gearbox made it equally capable on the highway or broken pavement. We also noted that the luggage and topbox made the Tiger more vulnerable to crosswinds and less sure of itself on windy freeways. Still, as we said, it was close and the four didn't tend to get spread out when charging in the twisty stuff.

Styling

BMW R1150GS Adventure 1st, Suzuki V-Strom 2nd, Triumph Tiger 3rd, Aprilia Caponord 4th.

It's subjective, so we won't waste a lot of

Model Comparison

ink on it, but the Adventure reeks of functional "attitude" and the others don't. Next to the GS, the others are adventure-poseurs. Its beefy handguards, the grill-covered fog lights, the fender extension, the robust crashbars, the giant gas tank...the whole gnarly militaristic presence of the beast never failed to bring a smile to our faces.

The V-Strom is attractive, but lacks much detail. Its styling, in spite of being new, seems bland; nicely integrated but inoffensive. But maybe it tickles your fancy? That's okay.

The Tiger is apparently a love-it-or-hate-it thing. Some loved its Lime Frog paint and bulbous bodywork, others firmly didn't. But all agreed the left side of the engine definitely needs a cosmetic makeover and the crumply plastic fork boots should go.

The CapoNord offers plenty of razzle-dazzle technical detail, but maybe too much. Covered with weird shapes and strange little panels everywhere, it looks very bulky. The group also agreed that the nose of the Capo was the least attractive of all.

Riding Impression

BMW R1150GS Adventure 1st, Triumph Tiger 2nd, Suzuki V-Strom 3rd, Aprilia CapoNord 4th.

Aside from its amusing intimidation factor, the BMW provides all-day comfort, with wind protection that's remarkably quiet at high speeds. Other than the Tiger, it is the only bike we'd consider doing a 1000-mile day on. As a cruiser, it gets the nod over the Tiger due to more relaxed gearing and wind protection. As a sport-tourer, its balance and handling are uncanny and defy its appearance. On different tires, it could give sportbikes a run for their money.

The Tiger's three-position adjustable seat height is a big plus and allows it to fit different sized pilots. You might be amazed what a difference just a 1/2" lift makes to place some of your weight on your legs and take it off your tailbone. Its aerodynamics were better than the V-Strom's but not supe-

rior to the Capo or Adventure. Still, its engine's wonderful driveability, sweet transmission and powerful, easily modulated brakes give it tremendous functionality. It's a satisfying ride.

The Suzuki V-Strom is a comfortable bike to ride, provided the road surface isn't too bumpy. The seating position, with a high seat and lowish pegs, is comfortable, but gives you the impression that you're sitting *on* the bike, not *in* it, compared to the others. The seat's shape makes the rider slide forward somewhat, but not to groin-crushing extremes. Suzuki offers a much taller windshield that should put the bike on a par with the rest in that regard. The V-Strom was the bike we preferred to ride fast and furious, making it the hooligan of the four. If Urban Warrior is your style, the V-Strom is your weapon.

The Aprilia CapoNord seemed initially to be the perfect compromise of suspension, motor and creature features. The good wind protection, upright seating position and comfy reach to the bars hinted at all-day pleasure. Unfortunately, this initial feel vanished after 100 miles, as the too-soft seat foam melted and left our butts begging for relief, and our feet squirming on the pegs trying to find a seating position we could live with. That's sad, because the bike has so much going for it, otherwise. But, at least it's fairly easily fixable.

Instruments and Controls

BMW R1150GS Adventure 1st, Aprilia CapoNord 2nd, Triumph Tiger 3rd, Suzuki V-Strom 4th.

The GS's instrument cluster is well thought out, and easy to read. Also, we preferred the analog odo/tripmeters on the Beemer; the only bike that didn't require us to turn on the ignition switch to read the mileage at gas stops. The nicest feature was the gear indicator light, located between the oil temperature and the fuel level gauge. Except for our perpetual gripe about BMW's odd turn signal switches and horn button,

everything was clear and logical, but we noticed the gas gauge wasn't too accurate, allowing nearly two gals. to be burned while still indicating full. Foot controls on the GS are well-placed and the ribbed steel rear brake lever fits the no-nonsense nature of the bike. Also, the rider's footpegs have rubber inserts that can be removed to expose cleated steel for muddy conditions.

The Aprilia CapoNord got high marks for the arrangement and completeness of its instrument panel. Highly stylized, it makes a rider feel as though he's in the cockpit of a jet fighter instead of a motorcycle—enhanced by the blue lighting of the panel at night. The ambient temperature gauge was appreciated as our bodies approached spontaneous combustion across Soda Lake. On the down side, we had difficulty getting the tripmeter to reset on several occasions.

The Triumph Tiger's instrument layout was perhaps the most straightforward. The white background of the speedometer, tachometer, water temperature and fuel level gauges were easy to read, regardless of lighting conditions. Only the location and size of the clock (shadowed on the lower right portion of the panel) made our gripe list. On the control side, in addition to the awkward rear brake pedal, the Tiger was the only one of the group not to have clutch and brake levers adjustable for reach.

The Suzuki V-Strom's instrument cluster is the most automotive of the adventure tourers; a big speedometer and tachometer with tiny gauges and idiot lights squeezed in and around like afterthoughts. The bar-type LCD readouts for the water temperature and fuel level (very pessimistic) were especially hard to read, and the various idiot lights, mounted behind a dark-tinted cover, were very difficult to see during the daytime. The lack of a clock was also a conspicuous cost-cutting move.

Attention to Detail

BMW R1150GS Adventure 1st, Triumph



Tiger 2nd, Suzuki V-Strom 3rd, Aprilia CapoNord 4th.

The Beemer abounds with thoughtful detail touches like steel-braided brake lines, rugged hand guards (mounted at both ends so they could actually take a hit off-road), two well-placed electrical outlets, heated grips, a centerstand, a padded brace on the handlebar, rugged crash bars—which all serve to remind you that the BMW Adventure is serious about its mission. In addition, the optional equipment on our machine, the off-road headlight guard, the fog lights (which sadly supply very little extra light but look very cool), the cylinder head protectors, the excellent tankbag and integrated hard bags (we asked for the giant aluminum “ammo” cans, but the standard types worked just fine) all reinforce the Adventure’s hard-core functionality.

The Tiger’s systems simply work well without resorting to superfluous bells and whistles. Upgraded to the 955cc capacity to beat the GS in 2001, we could expect an additional increase in hp, perhaps with the Speed Triple’s state of tune in the future to keep its new competition at bay. As is, the Tiger is a very nice package and Triumph’s optional hard luggage integrates nicely with the bike and carries a lot (although the right bag loses a lot of space to the exhaust pipe cut-out). We especially found the topbox handy, as you can dig around in it without tending to spill anything.

For a first-year effort, the Suzuki V-Strom is a well thought-out motorcycle. The fairing has a nice tidy feel to it, and the tucked-in exhaust cans give the bike a skinny feel. Not so comprehensively ready for an adventure-touring role, its hard luggage option is from GIVI, good stuff, but not integrated into the design of the bike like the others.

Likewise, the CapoNord is mostly a good first-year effort. Its optional integrated hard bags carry their weight low and hold a lot, but have inadequate weather sealing, allowing water entry in only a light rain. Its

biggest flaw was, of course, its seat foam, which effectively spoiled its riding impression. Also, we found the windshield needs to be removed (five screws) to clean dirt trapped in the narrow space behind it. And adding to the aggravation factor was a too-short sidestand that let the bike tilt so far to the left that righting it repeatedly was a literal pain in the neck. Aprilia supposedly says the stand is required by U.S. regulations. The European version has a proper length stand. It’s absurd.

Value

Suzuki V-Strom First, BMW R1150GS Adventure Second, Triumph Tiger Third, Aprilia CapoNord Fourth.

Value in our comparisons is based on the points scored in the previous categories factored against the price. With an MSRP of only \$8899, the V-Strom is the adventure-tourer for the financially challenged. And while you don’t get a clock or other bells and whistles, you do get the most hp, the least weight, the best transmission and the best price in a sporty, fun-to-ride package.

The BMW R1150GS Adventure came in second in our value category. While it does have the highest MSRP of \$15,200, the price includes a host of features, many unavailable even as options on the others, which we feel justify the price, plus it wins the all-important Riding Impression category.

At \$10,999 the CapoNord is \$100 more than the Tiger. Unfortunately for the CapoNord, its features don’t set it apart from the capabilities of the V-Strom, making its price something we’d pay only if we wanted to say that we owned an Italian adventure-tourer. We’d also have to give some consideration to parts and service availability. With fewer dealers, the Aprilia rider must have greater trust in his machine to range far and wide, and Aprilia doesn’t have an established track record as yet.

The Triumph Tiger’s \$10,799 price tag

seems a bargain compared to the BMW, but it lacks many of the Beemer’s features. However, as a proven package that rewards the rider with responsive power, comfort and control, it’s a good value.

Conclusions

Overall: Suzuki V-Strom 1st, BMW R1150 Adventure 2nd, Triumph Tiger 3rd, Aprilia CapoNord 4th.

An extremely close contest, in which we really couldn’t be sure of the first three places until the last half-point was tallied. But here they are:

By virtue of combining excellent performance and extraordinary value, the V-Strom narrowly wins this contest. It’s a very entertaining bike to ride, and if Suzuki will make an effort to supply more options for the hard-core adventure-tourer, the bike should be able to go toe-to-toe with the GS across the Outback.

However, the BMW R1150GS Adventure is the fullest expression of the adventure-tourer that’s currently available. If you’ve got the money and the in-seam to master it, the GS is an amazingly capable machine. Had it been fitted with less extreme tires, its improved braking score alone would have put it over the top. A great bike, ready for Mission Impossible, but its lofty price tag will keep it out of reach for many potential owners.

The Triumph Tiger was clawing at the Beemer’s heels. A wonderfully competent bike at a fair price, it gets all the basics right. That’s enough reason for many riders to choose it. Do you really need more?

The CapoNord came a relatively distant fourth. It needs some work to make it a serious contender. But Aprilia has already demonstrated a dedication to continual refinement, so we would expect its flaws to be corrected in the near future.

For our parts, we’ll certainly be looking forward to the next battle for adventure-touring supremacy. These go-anywhere machines are great fun. 🍌



Model Comparison

1st

The New DL1000 V-Strom will soon be the only Suzuki to carry Hammamatsu's thrilling 90° V-twin, as the TL1000R is slated to be discontinued. Even detuned more than 20 hp for its new role, the engine is very powerful and smooth running, making the V-Strom the top performer in this group. Combined with the lightest weight and lowest center of gravity, the V-Strom is the sportiest big dual-sport.



Above: The V-Strom's styling didn't make anyone swoon, but they weren't gagging, either. The taller windshield (\$79.95) would be better. Also, the odd square mirrors didn't give a wide enough view to the side for our tastes, but were otherwise clear.

Below: The 90°, 996cc V-twin has great character and runs very smoothly. Despite being detuned for more torque, it pumps out 88.9 hp to the rear wheel. The V-Strom feels like an oversized motocross bike compared to the ponderous beasts of its competitors—a lot of fun to ride.



Above: The tach and speedo are clean and stylish but the rest of the instrumentation is too small and hard to read. Sixth gear is indicated by a blue "overdrive" light, which several found distracting. It improves gas mileage but needs at least 65 mph.



Right: The under-seat mufflers look great. Suzuki lists GIVI hard bags and topbox as an option for \$800, as well as a center-stand for \$159.95.

Left: The knob above the rear footpeg adjusts the rear preload. Note also the good anatomical shape of the seats.



Right: A pair of twin-piston, single action stoppers are perfectly adequate, and the tall, narrow 110/80R19" front tire gives good directional stability in the rough stuff. The V-Strom's reassuring front end traction feel was one of its best attributes.



TESTERS' LOG

Adventure-tourers are an acquired taste. When you first throw a leg over one and heft it from its sidestand, your first reaction is, "My God, this thing is heavy!" Fortunately, the weight of these bikes disappears once underway, and the scenery can be enjoyed from high atop the balcony seats. If I were to consider buying any of the lot with a fully-funded savings account, it would have to be the BMW Adventure. Its upgraded features make the bike more menacing than ever, and the military-spec front-dressing makes me want to park it next to my M1 tank. All I need to do is load water and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) in the box luggage and head off for any long-range patrol. While I applaud Aprilia and Suzuki for contesting the crown, neither can match the brawn or brains of the GS. And while the economical Tiger soldiers on, it basks in the shade of the BMW, shaving off sales like a pilotfish munching on tidbits left over from a shark.

—LT Snyder

It's pretty hard to complain about any bike when it's associated with a four-day, all expenses paid (thank you Fratello) run on

\$50,000 worth of motorcycles from LA to Laguna Seca and back, via baked dirt roads cooked to 120°, up and over the Coast Range, with a final, cool dash up the fog-enshrouded Coast Highway through Big Sur. But for the sake of objective motojournalism, I'll try my best. This comparison forced me to conclude, as if I didn't know it already, that the heart and soul of any motorcycle is its engine. By that standard, the Suzuki V-Strom steals the show. Although it's detuned from its TL days and its mufflers are clearly in need of a bafflectomy to let its voice sing, the Suzuki V-twin has far and away the most character of any motor in this group. The V-Strom also has a comfortable, upright seating position, and its stiff suspension and knob-free tires make for excellent road manners. The BMW GS Adventure, however, makes for an equally compelling, if quite different, choice. The BMW wins in the styling department and looks like it's made from a block of solid steel. Its Telelever/Paralever suspension is awesome, and its big knobblies, which actually work okay on hard pavement, give the appearance that it can grind up any terrain. Appearances, however, can be deceptive. There's no way this 600-pound behemoth (or any of

2002 Suzuki DL1000 V-Strom

SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DATA

CycleStats™

ENGINE

Type:liquid-cooled, 90°, V-twin
 Valvetrain: ..DOHC, 54 valves per cyl.,
 adjusting shims under buckets
 Size:996cc
 Bore/stroke:98.0mm x 66.0mm
 Comp. ratio:11.3:1
 Fueling: ..Suzuki dual throttle valve EFI
 45mm x 2
 Exhaust:2-2 w/crossover

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission:6-speed
 Final drive:No. 532 O-ring chain,
 RPM @ 65 mph/redline:3900/9000

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:61.0"
 Rake/trail:26.5°/4.3"
 Ground clearance:6.3"
 Seat height:33.1"
 GVWR:965 lbs.
 Wet weight:523 lbs.
 Carrying capacity:442 lbs.

SUSPENSION

Front:43mm cartridge forks,
 non-adjustable,
 6.3" travel
 Rear:link-type, monoshock,
 adj. preload, and rebound damping,
 6.4" travel

BRAKES

Front:dual 310mm discs,
 two-piston, single-action calipers
 Rear:260mm disc,
 single-piston, single-action caliper

TIRES & WHEELS

Front:110/80R19 Bridgestone
 Trailwing on 2.50" x 19." wheel
 Rear:150/70R17 Bridgestone
 Trailwing on 4.00" x 17" wheel

ELECTRICS

Battery:12V, 10AH
 Ignition:digital-transistorized with
 throttle position sensor
 Headlight:55/60W x 2

FUEL

Tank capacity:5.8 gal.
 High/low/avg. mpg:47.9/35.3/43.7



PERFORMANCE

Measured top speed123.9 mph
 0-1/4 mile11.56 sec.
 @ 114.1 mph
 0-60 mph3.61 sec.
 0-100 mph8.96 sec.
 60-0 mph118.4'
 Power to Weight Ratio1:5.88
 Speed @ 65 mph indicated59.0

M/C RATING SYSTEM

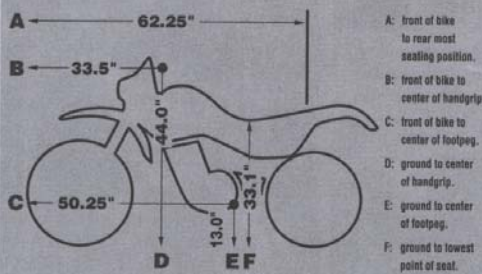
EXCELLENT
 VERY GOOD
 GOOD
 FAIR
 POOR

Open Dual-sport

Engine ●●●●●
 Transmission ●●●●●
 Suspension ●●●●●
 Brakes ●●●●●
 Handling ●●●●●
 Styling ●●●●●
 Riding Impression ●●●●●
 Instruments/Controls ●●●●●
 Attention to Detail ●●●●●
 Value ●●●●●

OVERALL RATING ●●●●●

ERGONOMICS TEMPLATE



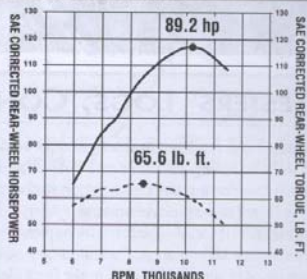
MISCELLANEOUS

Instruments:Speedo, tach,
 odometer, tripmeter,
 fuel level, coolant temp.
 Indicators:hi-beam, t/s, neutral,
 overdrive, oil pressure, low fuel
 MSRP:\$8899
 Valve adj. interval:7500 mi.
 Warranty:12 mo., unlimited miles
 Colors: Charcoal Gray, Columbia Blue

DYNAMOMETER DATA

Low end ●●●●○
 Mid-range ●●●●●
 Top end ●●●●●

Suzuki's 90° 996cc V-twin was a thrill in TL1000S guise. Now, detuned to deliver more torque at low/mid-range rpm, and losing 20+ hp off the top, it's not so thrilling, but still kicks butt in this class. However, its fancy new fuel-injection is too abrupt.



TEST NOTES

PICKS

- Great motor, best performance in the class
- Handling that makes twisty roads its natural habitat
- Value priced, so why pay more?

PANS

- Least ground clearance for rough stuff
- Shortest suspension travel in class, likes smoother roads
- Needs integrated luggage and better wind protection

STANDARD MAINTENANCE

Item	Time	Parts	Labor
Oil & Filter	0.4	\$15.95 + \$12	\$24.00
Air Filter	0.4	\$33.53	\$24.00
Valve Adjust	3.0	\$66.88	\$180.00
Battery Access	0.2	MF	\$12.00
Final Drive	0.2		\$12.00
R/R Rear Whl.	0.3		\$18.00
Change Plugs	0.7	\$17.90	\$42.00
Synch EFI	0.8		\$48.00
Totals	6.0	\$146.26	\$360.00

Note: MCN Labor rate changed to \$60/hr. from \$54/hr. in May 2002.

Model Comparison

2nd

BMW's R1150GS Adventure takes adventure touring to new extremes with knobby tires, long travel suspension, an even bigger gastank and enough crash bars and brush guards to rival a HUMVEE dressed for forward reconnaissance. Although it is the most expensive by far, its excellent detailing helps justify its price, and its handling and performance, despite its size, are truly remarkable.



Left: The Adventure's hard-core functionality makes the others in this group look like poseurs. The rock guard for the headlight and the fog lights (not worth the \$475) are optional, but the fender extension and engine crash bars are standard equipment.

Right: Instrumentation is essentially unchanged except that the Adventure's shorter top gear is no longer indicated as "E" for economy. First is shorter too, for improved acceleration from a stop. Hand guards and crossbar pad are also stock.



Bottom: Thankfully, our test unit was fitted with the optional lower seat. It's still tall, at 33.5", but comfy. Unlike the standard GS, it's not adjustable for height. The rack is also new.



Above: Despite its imposing appearance from certain angles, from the rear, the Adventure has a surprising lightness about it. A centerstand is standard.

Below: BMW's ABS II is standard, not the controversial, power-assisted Integral ABS. It can also be switched off for use on gravel roads and such. The braking distance with the knobbies was poor.



TESTERS' LOGS, CONTINUED

these bikes for that matter) should be taken off road, and the BMW's relatively paltry engine output and still-clunky transmission make for an odd justification for parting with over \$15,000. The Tiger? It's an ultra-smooth glider, but its competency, not to mention its styling, left me uninspired. As for the CapoNord, its castrated Mille engine, Barcalounger suspension, and massive presence of angular plastic, make for a clear last place finish. For me, it's a toss-up between the Suzuki and the BMW. Toss into the balance that you could almost buy two V-Stroms for the price of the Beemer, and that the Suzuki will blow its socks off, makes the V-Strom my choice, at least until my stock options kick in and I can afford the GS.

—Don Searle

Born in Europe after the popularity of the African raids, particularly the Paris-Dakar, this genre started with models such as the R60GS and Cagiva Elephant, soon spreading all over the motorcycle world, including even many 500cc machines with enormous gas tanks (capable of riding for three years before they needed

refueling)...all in the name of fashion. But do not laugh at our fellow European motorcyclists for adopting these strange, tall, heavy bikes, since they probably felt the same when we started buying cruisers, which look and ride like 1950s models...all in the name of fashion. These big trailbikes are supposed to be for the adventurous type, for the Indiana Jones in all of us. Almost like SUVs, these motorcycles evolved from on/off roaders to exercises in design. Just like the Ford Expeditions we see all around us, most people will never take these vehicles across the Gobi Desert, thus the emphasis is design over function, from tires to exhaust systems. However, as the old saying goes, "do not believe your lying eyes" because, once on the road, these motorcycles feel surprisingly light and easy to maneuver. Wide handlebars and their dirt bike riding positions make for a very comfortable ride. Of the four examples, I would separate them into three categories: the SUVs are the two big twins, the Aprilia and the Suzuki, especially the former with the larger fairing, slowest reactions and the Futura's instrument panel. Both show sport-touring styling and intentions, including tires, fairings and protection of critical components. The Tiger belongs in the

2002 BMW R1150GS Adventure

SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DATA

CycleStats™

ENGINE

Type:.....air/oil-cooled, boxer twin
Valvetrain:.....high-cam OHV,
4 valves per cyl., threaded adjusters
Size:.....1130cc
Bore/stroke:.....101.0mm x 70.5mm
Comp. ratio:.....10.3:1
Carburetion:.....Bosch Motronic MA2.4
electronic fuel injection
Exhaust:.....2-1 with catalyist

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission:.....6-speed
Final drive:.....Paralever shaft drive,
RPM @ 65 mph/redline:.....3960/7000

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:.....58.9"
Rake/trail:.....27.1°/4.5"
Ground clearance:.....8.5"
Seat height:.....33.5"
GVWR:.....992 lbs.
Wet weight:.....613.5 lbs.
Carrying capacity:.....378.5 lbs.

SUSPENSION

Front:.....35mm Telelever forks,
adj. 5-pos.preload and rebound,
8.4" travel
Rear:.....monoshock w/remote preload
adjuster, adj. rebound damping,
8.8" travel

BRAKES

Front:dual 305mm discs w/EVO ABS II,
4-piston, dbl.-action calipers
Rear:.....277mm disc w/EVO ABS II,
twin-piston, double-action caliper

TIRES & WHEELS

Front:.....110/80-R19 Continental
Twinduro on 2.50" x 19" wheel
Rear:.....150/70-R17 Continental
Twinduro on 4.00" x 17" wheel

ELECTRICS

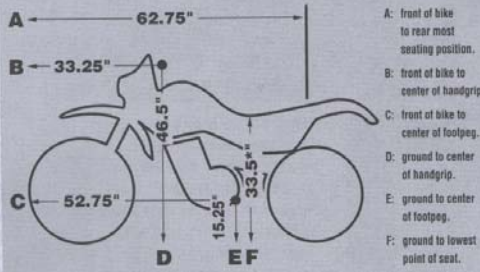
Battery:.....12V, 19AH
Ignition:.....digital-mapped with
throttle position sensor
Headlight:.....dual, 55-60W

FUEL

Tank capacity:.....7.9 gal.
High/low/avg. mpg:.....49.2/40.6/46.0



ERGONOMICS TEMPLATE



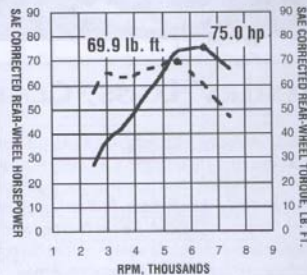
MISCELLANEOUS

Instruments:.....speedo, tach,
odometer, tripmeter,
oil temp., fuel level, clock
Indicators: hi-beam, t/s, neutral, gear,
ABS, battery, oil pressure, low fuel
MSRP:.....\$15,200
as tested (headlight guard \$125, fog
lights \$475, cylinder head guards \$109,
hard bags \$638.39) \$16,547.39
Valve adj. interval:.....12,000 mi.
Warranty:.....36 mo., or 36,000 miles.
Colors:.....Aluminum, Night Black

DYNAMOMETER DATA

Low end ●●●●○
Mid-range ●●●●○
Top end ●●●●○

The 1130cc boxer motor is very smooth for a large twin at cruising speeds, but vibration gets higher near redline. It's responsive, easy to use, and has a useful spread of power. We didn't notice any surging on this one, and that's a big improvement.



TEST NOTES

PICKS

- Visually intimidating, it's the *real* adventure-tourer
- Excellent handling belies its size and weight
- Good rider comfort and wind protection

PANS

- Knobby tires severely limit braking performance
- The long-travel forks really need a brace
- The price, darn it

STANDARD MAINTENANCE

Item	Time	Parts	Labor
Oil & Filter	0.5	\$11.99 + \$16	\$27.00
Air Filter	0.25	\$14.39	\$13.50
Valve Adjust	1.25	\$28.00	\$67.50
Battery Access	0.25	MF	\$13.50
Final Drive	0.25	\$7.00	\$13.50
R/R Rear Whl.	0.25		\$13.50
Change Plugs	0.3	\$15.58	\$16.20
Synch EFI	0.4		\$21.60
Totals	3.45	\$92.96	\$186.30

PERFORMANCE

Measured top speed.....124.5 mph
0-1/4 mile.....12.33 sec.
@ 105.51 mph
0-60 mph.....4.03 sec.
0-100 mph.....11.50 sec.
60-0 mph.....145.7'
Power to Weight Ratio.....1:8.18
Speed @ 65 mph indicated.....59.0

M/C RATING SYSTEM

EXCELLENT ●●●●●
VERY GOOD ●●●●○
GOOD ●●●●○
FAIR ●●●○
POOR ●●○

Open Dual-Sport

Engine ●●●●○
Transmission ●●●○
Suspension ●●●●○
Brakes ●●●○
Handling ●●●●○
Styling ●●●●○
Riding Impression ●●●●○
Instruments/Controls ●●●●○
Attention to Detail ●●●●○
Value ●●●○

OVERALL RATING ●●●●○

Model Comparison

3rd

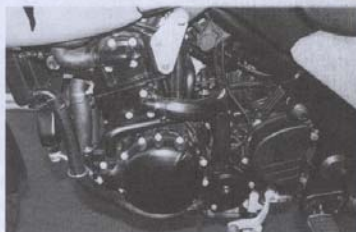
Triumph's Tiger 955i rivals the V-Strom for power and is the second-best buy in the group. Luggage and fuel capacity are very generous, too. Although its styling and detailing rank fourth, its superb engine driveability, excellent transmission, powerful brakes and relatively agile handling make it a pleasure to ride. Triumph got all the basics just right. Ask yourself, does the other stuff really matter?



Left: Tiger's twin headlights provide good lighting and the windshield and mirrors are quite effective. Hand guards keep your mitts warm in cool weather, and overall, the comfort level is high. The striped lime-yellow paint scheme stands out in traffic.

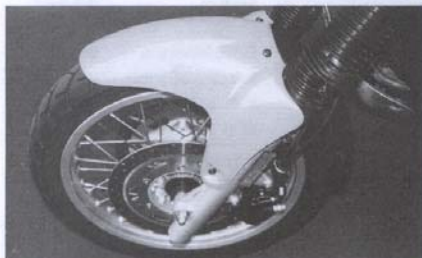


Right: The instruments are mostly a model of readability, but the digital clock (below the water temp gauge) is shadowed and hard to read most of the time.



Left: The Tiger's motor is beautifully behaved, with superb smoothness and perfect fuel-injection response. It growls like a diesel truck down low and rips at high rpm. The transmission shifts easily with short crisp throws, and the clutch is fine, too. It's just too bad the engine's appearance couldn't match its performance; what a mess of plumbing.

Below: The Nissan brakes are up to the job, but the cheesy collapsing fork boots let down the plot.



Right: Although the wide-angle lens exaggerates a bit, the Tiger really does have excellent luggage capacity. Just don't leave your candy bars in the right hand saddlebag! It gets pretty warm. The rear suspension's range of spring preload and rebound damping adjustments are adequate to handle the load ratings (just 11 lbs can supposedly be carried in the top trunk).



TESTERS' LOGS, CONTINUED

Sport Category, with very quick (as its name suggests), cat-like reactions. The Triple begs for a twisty road and revs up like a sport-bike. I found its riding position the most comfortable, with a flat seat and lower handlebars. Probably my first choice if I had to buy one of the four. The BMW is the fourth category: The Real Trailbike. The whole motorcycle is designed for this purpose and offers many features to confirm its intentions. Among others; lower center of gravity, air-cooled, shaft-drive, protection of critical components, appropriate tires and last, but not least, a centerstand. In other words, the GS looks like the bike that can take me to all the places I'll never go.

—Hector Cademartori

The BMW GS Adventure is the real deal. If you're serious about adventure-touring, this machine defines what you'd be looking for:

- 1) An air-cooled engine. (Check the radiators on the others, how many have rock protectors? Would you seriously consider crossing a wasteland on a bike that might puke its coolant on the ground and leave your skull bleaching in the sand?)

- 2) Shaft drive. (Okay, I know it's not perfect, but sand can't hurt what it can't reach.)

- 3) Huge gas tank capacity. (In our local deserts, so many gas stations have been closed by the new regulations that require underground tanks to be periodically replaced, that it's easy to run out of fuel if you pass a strategic filling station before/after business hours.)

- 4) Real hand guards. (Wind protectors are not the same thing. If the guards aren't bolted solid at each end, what do the think will happen when a branch takes a whack at your knuckles?)

- 5) Footpegs and brake pedal like a proper dirtbike's. (Mud is too good a lubricant for rubber-covered controls.)

- 6) A centerstand. (Murphy's Law will insist you'll need one if you don't have one.)

- 7) Accessory electrical outlet. (The GS has two, the others none. Who's serious here?)

All these things the GS Adventure has, and then some, like solid crash bars, heated grips, etc., etc. Parked next to the GS, the rest of the gang looks like pretenders. But, money is an issue

2002 Triumph Tiger 955i

SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DATA



ENGINE

Type:liquid-cooled, inline three
 Valvetrain:DOHC, 4 valves per cyl.,
 adjusting shims under buckets
 Size:955cc
 Bore/stroke:79mm x 65mm
 Comp. ratio:11.2:1
 Carburetion:Sagem MC1000
 closed-loop EFI,
 40mm throttle bodies
 Exhaust:3-2-1

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission:6-speed
 Final drive:No. 530 X-ring chain,
 RPM @ 65 mph/redline:4860/9500

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:61.0"
 Rake/trail:28.0°/3.62"
 Ground clearance:6.5"
 Seat height:32.75"-33.5"
 GVWR:928 lbs.
 Wet weight:542.5 lbs.
 Carrying capacity:381 lbs.

SUSPENSION

Front: 43mm forks, triple rate springs,
 non-adjustable
 9.06" travel
 Rear:monoshock w/remotely
 adj. preload, and rebound damping,
 7.87" travel

BRAKES

Front:dual 310mm discs,
 twin-piston, single-action calipers
 Rear:285mm disc,
 twin-piston, single-action caliper

TIRES & WHEELS

Front: 110/80R19 Metzeler Enduro 4 on
 2.50" x 19" spoked wheel
 Rear: 150/70R17 Metzeler Enduro 4 on
 4.25" x 17" spoked wheel

ELECTRICS

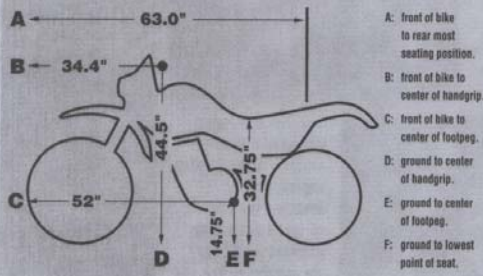
Battery:12V, 12AH
 Ignition:digital-inductive
 Headlight:2 x 55/60W

FUEL

Tank capacity:6.1gal.
 High/low/avg. mpg:50.4/38.8/44.9



ERGONOMICS TEMPLATE



MISCELLANEOUS

Instruments:speedo, tach,
 digital odometer, tripmeter,
 coolant temp., fuel level, clock
 Indicators:hi-beam, t/s, neutral,
 oil pressure, low fuel,
 engine management
 MSRP:\$10,899
 As tested (w/hard bags \$1029, and top
 box \$565)\$12,493
 Valve adj. interval:6000 mi.
 Warranty:24 mo., unlimited miles
 Colors:Roulette Green, Jet Black

TEST NOTES

PICKS

- Excellent driveability from its Sagem fuel injection
- Superior braking performance
- Revised transmission is terrific, with short travel, low effort

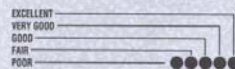
PANS

- Fork springs (stiffened for 2001) still feel soft
- Windshield's effectiveness ends at 75 mph
- New competitors make its power third-in-class, from first

PERFORMANCE

Measured top speed130 mph
 0-1/4 mile12.06 sec.
 @ 108.4 mph
 0-60 mph3.87 sec.
 0-100 mph10.60
 60-0 mph115.9'
 Power to Weight Ratio1:7.01
 Speed @ 65 mph indicated63.5

M/C RATING SYSTEM



Open Dual-Sport

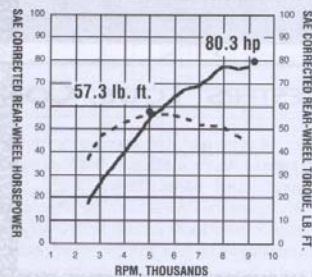
Engine	●●●●●
Transmission	●●●●○
Suspension	●●●●○
Brakes	●●●●●
Handling	●●●●○
Styling	●●●●○
Riding Impression	●●●●○
Instruments/Controls	●●●●○
Attention to Detail	●●●●○
Value	●●●●○

OVERALL RATING ●●●●○

DYNAMOMETER DATA

Low end ●●●○○
 Mid-range ●●●●○
 Top end ●●●●○

The Tiger 955i's motor is smooth running, but a bit buzzy at higher rpm (making the mirrors blur). Its Sagem fuel injection gives excellent driveability and good gas mileage—a sweetheart of a motor attached to a very nice transmission.



STANDARD MAINTENANCE

Item	Time	Parts	Labor
Oil & Filter	0.2	\$56.02	\$10.80
Air Filter	0.7	\$37.26	\$37.80
Valve Adjust	2.15		\$116.10
Battery Access	0.15	MF	\$8.10
Final Drive	0.10		\$5.40
R/R Rear Whl	0.25		\$13.50
Change Plugs	1.25	\$4.85	\$67.50
Synch EFI	1.0		\$54.00
Totals	5.8	\$98.13	\$313.20

Model Comparison

4th

Aprilia's CapoNord has great drivability, with the same excellent Sagem fuel injection as the Tiger. It handles well and its fuel and gear carrying capacity ranks with the best. Its transmission is good, but the power-assisted clutch feels odd and inhibits clutchless upshifts. But, the brakes have a habit of pulsing as if the rotors were warped, and worse, the seat will give you Ebola-grade monkey-butt.



Above: It would be hard to say the CapoNord has a pretty face, but at least the windshield is quite effective, although it must be removed to clean trapped dirt.

Right: The instrumentation is good; clear and easy to read, but it was often difficult to reset the tripmeter. The bars offer plenty of leverage, both hand levers are adjustable and the mirrors are well-placed, but hand guards are not included.



Below: The seating appears to be well shaped and comfy and the passenger seat removes to expose a rack, but the foam padding is too squishy. You'll be in real pain after the second day in the saddle.



Below: The CapoNord's aluminum wheels allow tubeless tires and are very attractive. The suspension works well for long rides, soft and supple. However, we noted that the radiators are vulnerable to rocks. The usually excellent Brembo brakes felt good until the bike was moving slowly, when they pulsed badly. Cleaning the discs and pads helped, but the pulsing returned.



Left: The U.S.-spec kickstand allows absurdly steep parking angles, making wrestling the bike upright a chore. The standard hard bags are positioned low and very large, but have no sealing gaskets and leaked in fairly light rain.



TESTERS' LOGS, CONTINUED

for most of us, and is what keeps me from buying a GS. Bless their corporate balance sheets, BMW demands, and gets, serious money for their serious motorcycle.

So, for me the Tiger is the clear alternative. It's a great ride, agile enough, comfortable enough, with a very satisfying motor (super drivability and a slick transmission), excellent brakes and enough travel in the suspension to smooth the explorer's backroads. And, I like the way it looks (really), and the Lime Green paint works for me, too.

The Suzuki is a lot of fun, but falls a bit short of the goal in my estimation. Its seat is okay, but I don't believe I'd like it after several long days. The engine offers plenty of personality and makes for a narrow package, but that abrupt fuel-injection response takes away a lot of drivability, and I doubt a re-map with a Power Commander would entirely cure it. You really want smooth throttle response on slippery surfaces.

It's handling is my favorite for Highway One's twisties, but I know the GS would smother 'em all with less gnarly rubber.

The CapoNord, as I've documented in my editorial this month,

is the machine I've put the most miles on this month. And, unfortunately, my butt still hurts, making our re-acquaintance on the Laguna Seca ride a painful reminder of our time together. Also, I find its styling, especially the front, as repellent as the seat. Too bad, as it actually has the smoothest motor (if you wear earplugs to hide its clattering counterbalancers), a stiff, straight chassis, a good transmission and very good wind protection.

Although I didn't agree with every ranking, democracy rules at MCN, and I can't disagree with the outcome. The V-Strom is a lot of bike for the money. But, to be fair to its European competition, which take the Paris-Dakar formula more seriously, the V-Strom could almost be considered a naked bike with odd wheel sizes as much as an adventure-tourer. Considered in this way, where could you go on a ZRX-12R, Bandit 1200, Nine-One-Nine or FZ1 if you put more dirt-friendly tires on them? I suspect, most of the same places you'd find yourself going on the V-Strom. And in the naked class, the V-Strom isn't the bargain it is compared to the European machines since it doesn't offer adjustable forks or top-shelf brakes... Hmm?

—Dave Searle

2002 Aprilia ETV1000 Caponord

SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DATA

CycleState™

ENGINE

Type:.....liquid-cooled, 60° V-twin
 Valvetrain:DOHC, 4 valves per cyl.,
 adjusting shims under buckets
 Size:997.62cc
 Bore/stroke:.....97.0mm x 67.5mm
 Comp. ratio:10.4:1
 Carburetion:Sagem EFI,
 throttle bodies 47mm x 2
 Exhaust:2-2

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission:6-speed
 Final drive:No. 530 O-ring chain,
 RPM @ 65 mph/redline:3900/8750

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:61.4"
 Rake/trail:.....27.9°/5.08"
 Ground clearance:6.75"
 Seat height:31.5"
 GVWR:944 lbs.
 Wet weight:568 lbs.
 Carrying capacity:376 lbs.

SUSPENSION

Front:50mm Marzocchi forks,
 non-adjustable,
 6.9" travel
 Rear:Sachs monoshock damper,
 adj. preload, comp. and reb. damping,
 7.3" travel

BRAKES

Front:dual 300mm Brembo discs,
 two-piston, single-action calipers
 Rear:270mm disc,
 single-piston caliper
 Front:110/80VR19 Metzeler
 Tourance on 2.50" x 19" wheel
 Rear:150/70VR17 Metzeler
 Tourance on 4.00" x 17" wheel

ELECTRICS

Battery:12V, 14AH
 Ignition: ..twin-plug/cyl., mapped with
 throttle position sensor
 Headlight:55/60W x 2

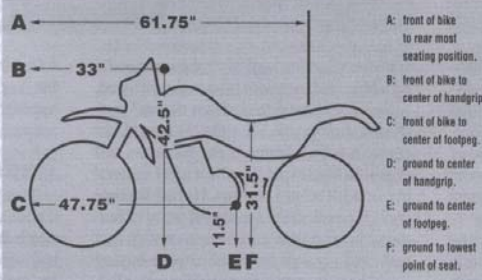
FUEL

Tank capacity:6.6 gal.
 High/low/avg. mpg:47.4/42.2/44.3

MISCELLANEOUS



ERGONOMICS TEMPLATE



Instruments:.....speedo, tach,
 odometer, tripmeter, fuel level,
 clock, ambient temp, coolant temp.
 Indicators: .. hi-beam, t/s, neutral, EFI
 fault,oil pressure, low fuel, kickstand,
 MSRP:\$10,999
 As tested (w/hard bags).....\$11,510.44
 Valve adj. interval:.....10,000 mi.
 Warranty:2 yr., unlimited miles
 Colors:Blue, Black, Silver, Red

TEST NOTES

PICKS

- Smooth, torquey motor
- Good transmission
- Good wind protection

PANS

- Seat will give you rump roast
- Sidestand is way too short, and no centerstand is included
- Pulsing brakes on two different machines indicate problems

PERFORMANCE

Measured top speed132.1 mph
 0-1/4 mile11.80 sec.
 @ 111.62 mph
 0-60 mph3.71 sec.
 0-100 mph9.68 sec.
 60-0 mph125.4'
 Power to Weight Ratio1:6.87
 Speed @ 65 mph indicated65.0

M/C RATING SYSTEM

EXCELLENT
 VERY GOOD
 GOOD
 FAIR
 POOR

Open Dual-Sport

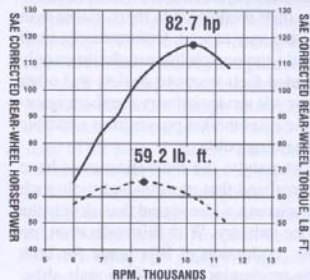
Engine ●●●●○
 Transmission ●●●●○
 Suspension ●●●●○
 Brakes ●●●●○
 Handling ●●●●○
 Styling ●●●●○
 Riding Impression ●●●●○
 Instruments/Controls ●●●●○
 Attention to Detail ●●●●○
 Value ●●●●○

OVERALL RATING ●●●●○

DYNAMOMETER DATA

Low end ●●●●○
 Mid-range ●●●●○
 Top end ●●●●○

Aprilia's 60° V-twin needs counterbalancers to run smoothly. Unfortunately, the clatter these create detracts from the motor's character. But its power, smoothness and fuel injection drivability are very good. Wear earplugs and you won't complain.



STANDARD MAINTENANCE

Item	Time	Parts	Labor
Oil & Filter	0.4	\$33.80 + \$14	\$24.00
Air Filter	0.5	\$22.00	\$30.00
Valve Adjust	2.0	\$80.00	\$120.00
Battery Access	0.3	MF	\$18.00
Final Drive	0.3		\$18.00
R/R Rear Whl.	0.7		\$42.00
Change Plugs	0.5	\$57.00	\$30.00
Synch EFI	1.0		\$60.00
Totals	5.7	\$206.80	\$342.00

Note: MCN Labor rate changed to \$60/hr. from \$54/hr. in May 2002.