



descendant of that '81 R80 G/S, glides down the road to the soothing thrum of its 1,170cc twin, the first liquid-cooled Boxer motor ever. Bags of torque lurk in reserve, making the bike sneaky fast and always ready to push the 525-pound GS forward at an impressive rate at any rpm and in any gear.

Its ride and handling qualities are pretty much what you want them to be. That's the result of the optional Dynamic ESA (Electronic Suspension Adjustment), ASC traction control, adjustable riding

modes, and ABS, all of which influence each other depending upon the setting the rider chooses. Match all that with a beautifully contoured and padded seat, and you have the industry's most comfortable adventurer, reflecting BMW's decades of experience building top-flight touring bikes.

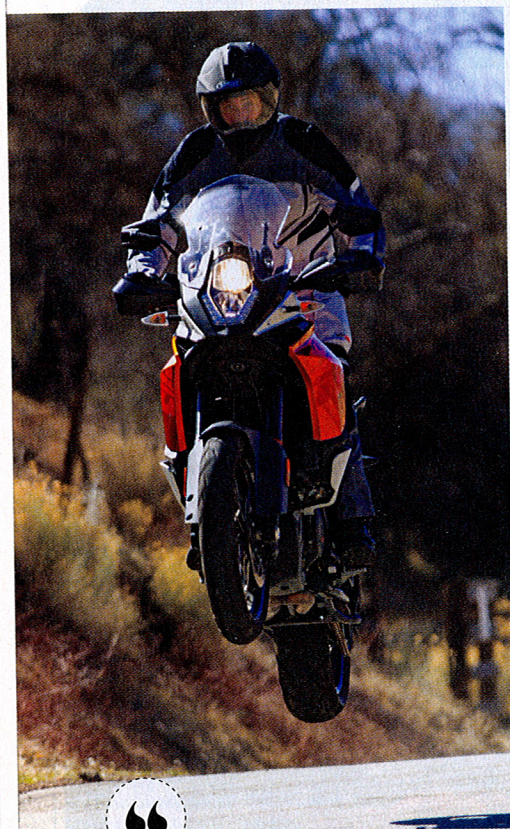
While the BMW impresses with its finesse, the 1,195cc KTM is a 129-hp V-twin wildcat that wheelies in the first three or four gears, burns the quarter-mile in 10.62 seconds at 130 mph, hits

a top speed of 151 mph, and fires from corner to corner on back roads like it has a rocket stuck up its tail. If the GS serves up its power with a magnum of champagne on a silver platter, the Adventure does it with a bottle of Bud slid down the bar. For certain, it is very refined, but in its own uncompromising, "let's get it on" way.

Like the GS, the 1190 has a full suite of electronic suspension, traction control, power delivery, and ABS rider aids; but while the BMW's are optional, the Katoom's are standard. They also engage in a lot of cross-talk, allowing you to tune those performance factors over a sufficiently wide range to cope with anything you might encounter. Plus, the ABS is lean-sensitive, adjusting the antilock dependent upon how fast and far the 1190 is banked over in a corner.

Meanwhile, the V-Strom splits the difference between the other two—not as polished as the BMW, not as raucous as the KTM, and sans as many electronic aids as either. It's a solid, legitimate adventure bike that never gets embarrassed by the other two, despite being priced several thou lower and having the smallest (1,037cc) engine. The 90-degree V-twin is smooth, torquey, and responsive, and its quarter-mile performance is only half a second and about 7 mph behind the BMW's; even its top-gear roll-ons are just fractions of a second slower.





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OFF-ROAD OR ON, THE KTM WAS THE MOST CAPABLE, MOST CONFIDENCE-INSPIRING, AND MOST FUN OF THE TRIO.

Because the 'Strom has an excellent chassis and is lighter and lower than the others, it handles beautifully. The 468-pound (dry) 1000 devours back-road corners like that was its dedicated purpose, yet it's rock-steady on straightaways.

Okay, but how did these bikes play the

adventure game in the dirt?

Pretty damned well, considering that they all are quarter-ton motorcycles riding on knobless street tires. We never tackled gnarly, rutted, rocky climbs, since that's not what these bikes are intended to conquer in their existing configurations; we instead stayed on dirt roads, narrow trails, and gravel-strewn two-tracks. Only deep sand gave them any trouble, again, mostly due to their tires.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the Suzuki. With its traction control either turned off or on the least sensitive of its three settings, the V-Strom churned through the aforementioned with no trouble whatsoever. The fork digested everything we bounced over without a hiccup, and the shock only bottomed on some of the whoops. You can't turn off the ABS, so we had to be mindful of that when braking on slick terrain.

So, too, was the BMW impressive off-road, considering its greater weight, shaft drive, and two big cylinders poking out like fat outriggers. Its smooth, linear torque was easy to modulate in

riding mode's Enduro setting, and the low center of gravity provided by the opposed-twin layout helped disguise the GS's mass. We were a little disappointed with the previous R1200GS's suspension, but the new bike's Telelever fork and Paralever rear combination—together with a new steering damper for 2014—is vastly improved.

Which brings us to the KTM. Once you quit the tarmac and hit the dirt, the 1190 morphs from a take-no-prisoners streetbike to an ass-kicking dirt bike. In agility, stability, balance, steering, suspension, and adjustable power delivery, the KTM was this test's off-road class act. It was less bothered by rocks, ruts, and other trail obstacles, and even coped with the sand a little better. With the traction control in the Offroad position, the ABS even allows rear-wheel skidding while still applying antilock to the front brake.

Actually, the 1190's stellar dirt manners should have come as no surprise. KTM has been building championship-caliber off-road machinery for decades, and that know-how has translated directly to the 1190. Whether off-road or on, it was the most capable, most confidence-inspiring, and most fun of the trio. The R1200GS is the best overall streetbike, the Suzuki the best bang-for-buck. But when you consider the KTM's advantages in almost every area of performance—plus, its standard MSRP gets you all the electronic rider aids at about the same price as the BMW *without* such equipment—the outcome here is a slam dunk.

In the March issue of *Cycle World*, we stated that the KTM 1190 might be the best all-around bike in the world. We still believe that but with a small word change: Replace “might be” with “is.”

CW

UPS

DOWN

BMW
R1200GS



- Highly refined all around
- Shaft drive = no chain maintenance
- Better tourer than some tourers

- Footpegs a bit far to the rear
- Electronics controls could be more intuitive
- \$\$\$ with all the optional electronics

KTM 1190
ADVENTURE



- Electronic rider aids are standard
- Does everything exceptionally well
- Baaaaa fast!

- Engine mechanically noisy
- Awkward, two-hand windscreen adjustment
- Nosebleed seat height

SUZUKI
V-STROM
1000 ABS



- Most-affordable big adventure bike
- Bright, dark-piercing headlight
- Comfortable ergonomics

- No ABS Off switch
- No centerstand
- Desperately seeking skid plate

THE NUMBERS

BIKE	BMW R1200GS	KTM 1190 ADVENTURE	SUZUKI V-STROM
Price (as tested)	\$19,520	\$17,834	\$12,699
Dry weight	520 lb.	490 lb.	474 lb.
Wheelbase	59.2 in.	61.2 in.	61.4 in.
Seat height	33.9/34.6 in.	34.3/35.0 in.	33.4 in.
Fuel mileage	37 mpg	35 mpg	36 mpg
0-60 mph	2.9 sec.	2.8 sec.	3.1 sec.
1/4 mile	11.07 sec. @ 119.44 mph	10.62 sec. @ 129.70 mph	11.60 sec. @ 112.82 mph
Horsepower	116.5 hp @ 7900 rpm	128.8 hp @ 9360 rpm	91.1 hp @ 8240 rpm
Torque	84.0 lb.-ft. @ 6260 rpm	81.3 lb.-ft. @ 7670 rpm	67.4 lb.-ft. @ 3980 rpm
Top speed	137 mph	151 mph	126 mph