BMW R1150RT v R1200RT

Could the all-new R1200RT big tourer prove to be even better than the previous R1150? Our panel of owners explains all...

BMW RT OWNERS OWNERS’ PANEL

PAUL DICKINSON, 42
A MOTORCYCLE training instructor with www.in-gear.co.uk, Paul did 40,000 miles on his beloved R1150 before trading it in for a new R1200 earlier this year.

JOHN TAYLOR, 55
John owned a R1150RT for four years and wishes he had kept it instead of buying the R1200RT.

GEORGE EDWARDS, 43
George runs www.rtrider.co.uk, a website dedicated to BMW RT owners. He owned an R1150 for four years, covering nearly 50,000 miles, and is already up to 6000 miles on the new R1200RT.

PERFORMANCE

Paul: “The new model feels smoother straight away. It fires quickly, the throttle is lighter and the engine feels more responsive. On the move it just gets up and goes, and it really thrives above 5000rpm. At first I was arriving at corners much quicker than I realised – and two-up performance is a revelation compared to the 1150.”

John: “I’m not that impressed with the new model. The 1150 would cruise at 5000rpm-plus like a turbine. By comparison, the new 1200 feels very harsh above 4400rpm in top. The 1200 has more power, but lacks the low down grunt that the older bike had. However, once you rev it there’s noticeably more power.

“Fuel consumption varies from 58 to 46 miles to the gallon, depending on the terrain and my right hand.”

George: “I always ride two-up with the wife, and usually fully loaded, so the extra power is really noticeable. There’s much more punch out of corners, compared to the old 1150 which felt a bit sluggish.

“With the new bike there’s a surge of power, especially above 6000rpm, but there’s still plenty of low down grunt, too. It also means that you don’t have to change down the gearbox so often. On the old 1150 I had to drop down to fifth gear on A and B roads, as it didn’t have the grunt for overtaking in top. The new 1200 is far better, I just leave it in top most of the time.”

RIDING

Paul: “The 1200’s seat is slightly higher than the 1150, but the new bike is still easier to manoeuvre at low speeds and the top heavy feeling has virtually gone.

“The rear brake is also improved, and the front feels more progressive than the 1150 – but I wouldn’t say it was better, only different. The suspension takes care of rougher surfaces in a more gentle way and it’s better two-up, too – less likely to ground out. There’s been many a time when we’ve scraped the 1150’s centrestand during fast cornering.”

John: “The weight reduction has made the new bike easier to ride, especially on back roads. However, on long fast sweepers it doesn’t feel as planted as the old 1150.

“Low speed handling is much better on the new bike and the rear brake is much better as well. I hated the old linked-brake system – it was too sharp, a nightmare in a gravelly car park two-up. The non-linked brakes on the new bike are far better.

“The low beam is also much better.
on the new bike, but there’s no adjuster now for some reason. The pillion seat is too slippery, too – my other half is constantly sliding around. The old 1150 seat was much better.”

George: “The new RT is much lighter and easier to ride. On the old bike, fully loaded and with the wife on the back, we had a problem with ground clearance – the new bike is much better. I’ve owned BMW’s for the last nine years so I’m used to the stiff feeling of the old 1150. I just hope it smoothes out over time.”

The mirrors have a major blind spot so I’ve a pair of GS mirrors, which fit fine and are a massive improvement.

George: “I’ve owned RTs before so I was expecting it to use oil, but that should decline as the miles mount – it also goes about 55 miles to the gallon. The standard paniers are more than large enough, but they’re easily scratched and I’ve fitted some clear protective plastic to protect them.”

The rear Bridgestone tyre needed replacing after 4,800 miles, which isn’t as long as on the older bike. But they’re really good, I always fit Bridgestones.”

**VERDICT**

Paul: “The new RT is a very fine bike. It’s lighter, quicker, the gearing is better, and it’s far more comfortable. The 1150RT is all the things that I wanted my 1150 and Ducati bike: it won’t suit everyone but it’s worth a try.”

John: “As you can gather I’m not too pleased, although there’s no fault of Pödeck’s. I’ve spent the best part of £1,000, or was it four days, for it. It’s turned out to be inferior to my old 1150. I just hope it smooths out and stops dripping oil – I’ve just come back from touring Europe and it’s better, but I still don’t like it as much as my old bike.”

George: “Some say it’s expensive, but I disagree. You don’t have to do anything to it, do everything I ask of it and by riding for three or four years to 60, or 70,000 miles I’ll get my money’s worth. You can buy cheaper bikes but not many will last 70,000 miles. I think it’s worth the money and I’m really pleased with it.”

George: “The cookstoves are so fake, I’ve even given the Ego, the Taiwaneese company’s attempt to overtake Piaggio’s X9 Evolution in dodgy monikers, having already given us the Ego, the People, and the frankly incomprehensible Wing costs. The mirrors are oddly positioned to show mostly your fists, the red-on-black inner ring of mph speed figures is tricky to read, and the turbulence (if you’re tall) makes focusing matters much anyway. What’s important is that it’s capable of the long distance commuting it’s designed for, able to sustain 80mph-plus speeds on motorways, is stable at speed and corners securely. All of which is useful. COOL. SO ANY OTHER COMPLAINTS? Well, the comfort is stable at speed and corners securely. All of which is useful. COOL. SO ANY OTHER COMPLAINTS? Well, the comfort is stickier than Piaggio’s X9 Evolution, but not many will last 70,000 miles. I think it’s worth the money and I’m really pleased with it.”

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**MCN SAYS:**

- Low price in the class for high build quality
- Decent looks with high specification
- No rear suspension, disappointing storage and comfort
- Buzzing turbulence for taller riders, oddly positioned mirrors