

FIRST RIDES

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SUZUKI INTRUDER M1800R

Super size me

INTRUDER'S fat 240-section rear tyre is the biggest ever on a production Japanese cruiser



In the 'biggest is best' world of cruisers, Suzuki's new Intruder has a head start with 1783cc and the fattest rear tyre around

BY NEALE BAYLY PICTURES BY NELSON AND RILES

WITH a huge 240-section rear tyre, butch upside-down forks, a monster 1783cc V-twin powerplant and unique swooping bodywork, the new Suzuki M1800R Intruder is about as loud and proud as cruisers get. And that's exactly how the Japanese firm intended it to be.

In the States, big power cruisers are the in thing. While Yamaha has its all-new 'Star' range, topped off by the XV1900 Midnight Star, Honda its VTX1800 and Kawasaki its VN2000, Suzuki decided it was time to hit back.

The M1800 may be the most powerful production cruiser this side of Triumph's Rocket III, but it's not a terrifying fire-breathing monster. Rolling along near-deserted roads reveals the Intruder to be a big bike which doesn't like to be hustled.

Weighing 315kg dry, this is no city commuter. But with just 3200rpm on the digital tachometer, 70mph on the analogue speedo, and an endless horizon to be reeled in with the super light throttle, this is a big experience in every sense of the word. And the deep,

mellow-sounding soundtrack coming from the exhaust is the perfect accompaniment.

At 1783cc, the new engine is not the largest on offer, but Suzuki is claiming it to be the most powerful V-twin cruiser engine in the world. Producing 127bhp at 6200rpm, and 118ftlb of torque at 3200rpm, it has its Kawasaki and Yamaha rivals beaten. It doesn't out-torque the VN – but not much does.

With massive 112mm pistons blasting up and down their 90.5mm strokes, the engine will rev to 7400rpm before the limiter shuts things down. Maximum power is quoted at 6200rpm, but the bike still keeps pulling solidly until 7000rpm if required.

In fact, the compact engine is the best bit. With meaty power available anywhere in the range, there's never a second's hesitation when you twist the throttle, and the bike pulls from just a few rpm off idle all the way to the redline.

If you crack the throttle open hard with the big pistons thumping at four grand there's a feral growl, and you feel

a deep, mellow vibration in your gut as you hurtle forwards at an extremely rapid pace. Then, rolling off from higher rpm as you shift down through the gears gives the most wonderful sound from the pipes as the engine slows rapidly. According to Suzuki engineer Yutaki Nitta, this was a deliberate move to give the bike added character.

This smooth vat of power is greatly aided by Suzuki's sports bike-derived fuel injection system. Two single-barrel throttle bodies get the fuel and air into the cylinders and feature dual throttle valves. With the system controlled by a powerful 32-bit processor, it's little wonder the fuelling is so perfect.

Spent gases pass through a catalytic converter, and the two-into-one-into-two exhaust system is also equipped with Suzuki's SET power valve (Suzuki Exhaust Tuning). This is claimed to improve combustion at low rpm, and seems to do its job just fine.

What's also different from previous Suzuki Intruders is the all-new V-twin's 54° layout, compared to the normal 45°. It's water-cooled, uses four valves

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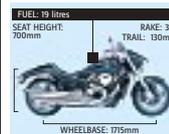
BAGS of smooth power, quick steering and good high-speed stability add up to an almighty package

'There's never a second's hesitation when you twist the throttle'

SUZUKI INTRUDER M1800R

★★★★★
COST: £8999
POWER: 127bhp
TORQUE: 118ftlb
WEIGHT: 315kg

Availability: April 2006
Colour: Black
New for 2006: New model
Insurance group: 14 (of 17)
Info: Suzuki GB, 01202-823344



TECHNICAL SPEC

Engine: Liquid-cooled 1783cc (112 x 90.5mm) 8v four-stroke V-twin. Fuel injection. Five gears.
Chassis: Tubular steel frame. 46mm USD forks, single rear shock, adjustable for preload. Brakes: 2 x 310mm front discs with radial four-piston calipers. 275mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 130/70 x 18 front, 240/40 x 18 rear.



FRONT end has a real 'Outta my way' look

in front and the bars feel high and wide. That said, with a low 700mm seat height, the Intruder is easy to manoeuvre at low speed and the side-stand is well positioned, too.

Within a few miles you melt into position and by lunchtime you feel right at home. The seat is very broad and the ergonomics let you sit straight up, so there's no slouching on the tailbone. Overall, the big Suzuki scores very big points in the comfort department.

The throttle action is as light as it gets, as is the cable-operated clutch, and all the handlebar controls have a spartan simplicity to them. The brake lever is six-way adjustable – although the clutch is not – and requires a big reach to pull it. The rear brake pedal is also a little awkward to use.

The front set-up has Tokico radially-mounted four-piston calipers grabbing a pair of 310mm floating discs. Straight off the bat, they are a tad disappointing, lacking initial bite. But as the day wears on, with a few hard stops under their belt, they really start to improve.

In fact the whole front looks as if it means business: the wheel itself is a custom-looking, cast aluminium-alloy item that rolls in between a set of fat 46mm USD forks. The front tyre is an aggressive, sport-sized 130/70 x 18 which, along with the wide handlebars, blesses the big Suzuki with super-light steering. With a 1715mm wheelbase and lazy 32° and 130mm trail steering

geometry set-up you don't expect such quick steering, yet it's also extremely solid at speed. At one point the bike was indicating over 120mph when I suddenly needed to lose 30mph for a high-speed left. Rolling off and scrubbing a little speed with the brakes, the big Suzuki simply swept through with the lightest of tugs on the bars and without the slightest hint of wobble or weave.

At lower speeds, however, that humungous 240-section rear tyre means much more effort is required for tight manoeuvring, although a few U-turns showed that the M1800R is also extremely manageable when required.

It's also well thought-out and well bolted together. There are no unsightly wires or hoses and neat, flush-mount Allen bolts are used throughout the bodywork. The large 19-litre tank wears top quality paint, as do the fenders and side panels, and the chrome engine cases look the business.

There are plenty of plastic parts, but you have to tap things to find them and from a few paces you'd never spot them – the covers over each cylinder's twin spark plugs are chromed plastic, for instance.

Overall, the new M1800R looks suitably mean and futuristic and is able to back up its looks with a monster motor and a decent handling package. It's a formidable new competitor in the performance cruiser class.

AJP PR4 200 ENDURO

On the right trail
Quality parts, but lacks oomph

BY ALASTAIR WALKER PICTURES BY RALPH PETTS

PORTUGUESE firm AJP has a potentially winning formula, which it has stuck with for the past ten years. This new PR4 200 Enduro joins a 125cc Enduro and Supermoto in their range, all using Honda-developed four-stroke single-cylinder engines, Paioli suspension, classy alloy wheel rims and a lightweight frame.

The build quality of the 200 is way above many rival brands' lightweight enduro machines. But it costs three grand on the road, which shows that anyone making motorcycles in the EU these days cannot compete with low-wage manufacturers in China.

HOW DOES IT GO?

TO be blunt, it lacks the oomph that a 200cc single should have. You plod up through the five-speed gearbox, revving the bike against the stop until the vibes kick in, then change up a gear. Eventually it tops out at about 65mph, but a de-restricted 125cc two-stroke would see it off fairly rapidly.

The AJP 200 is happiest around town, where the effective brakes and long-travel suspension allow you to carve through traffic nicely. You know there's enough acceleration to beat most cars from the lights, but on an urban dual carriageway the buzziness of the single-cylinder motor gets irritating very quickly.

IS THAT ITALIAN SUSPENSION GOOD?

YEP, the Paioli forks are non-adjustable but have plenty of finesse about them. On a bike this light they work very well indeed – on or off-road. At the rear end, the shock can be adjusted for preload and feels quite firm – you could tackle some proper jumps and tree roots on this bike and it would cope easily. In a nutshell, the chassis out-performs the motor by about 50%.

IS IT ROAD-LEGAL?

YES, but it's more of a trail bike than a ride-to-college machine. The handlebars



BASIC Honda 198cc engine is a bit of an old plodder



LIKE a bit of dirt? So does the AJP

are nice and wide, the footpegs are narrow for squeezing through deep ruts and the brakes are nice and progressive.

The AJP 200 has the fuel tank set under the seat, which helps lower the centre of gravity a bit. It's a see-through plastic tank, which means you can easily see how you're doing for fuel, although there's a warning light on the dash as back-up.

It isn't too tall for short-in-the-leg riders, and has an electric start. In many ways it is a perfect novice green-laner machine and undoubtedly tough enough to take the inevitable knocks that regular off-roading would inflict on it.

When it comes to the twisty stuff, the bike handles really well – in fact it would make a great little supermoto with alternative wheels fitted.

STILL SEEMS A LOT FOR A TINY TRAILIE

FACT is, there are a great many cheap off-roaders on the market these days, but some of them look like they would snap into pieces if you tried to jump a large molehill at 50mph. An internet-sourced 'bargain' may also have very little real



PAIOLI forks and rear shock are class items, though

spares back-up or a credible warranty service.

With its old-fashioned two-valve sohc motor, the AJP isn't a particularly fast bike. But it has easy handling, good brakes and a classy chassis, which makes it a safe choice as a first-timer's bike. If you value overall quality and durability, the AJP is a good buy – especially if you like the idea of off-roading on a regular basis.

However, if you simply want to commute on an off-road 'styled' bike, but not get mud on your boots, look elsewhere at bikes like the Kymco Stryker 125, Honda Varadero 125 or perhaps Honda's XR125L.

AJP PR4 200 ENDURO

★★★★★
COST: £2995
POWER: 13bhp
TORQUE: 11.4ftlb
WEIGHT: 100kg

Availability: Now
Colour: Black
New for 2006: New model
Insurance group: 6 (of 17)
Info: Adly Moto, 01889-577552



TECHNICAL SPEC

Engine: Air/oil-cooled 198cc (69 x 53mm) 2v four-stroke single. 30mm carb. Five gears.
Chassis: Tubular steel frame. Paioli 41mm forks, Paioli single rear shock, adjustable for preload. Brakes: 255mm front disc with twin-piston caliper. 210mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 90/90 x 21 front, 120/90 x 18 rear.