

F800GS Adventure “Just Right”

IN WRITING A REVIEW FOR THE 2014

F800GS Adventure, I have to admit that I am slightly biased. My daily ride is a 2009 F650GS, so there is a relative familiarity I already have with the GS models...or so I thought. The updated controls in 2012 models left me hitting the horn a half dozen times in the first 20 minutes, expecting to signal left but bemused by an abrupt honk each time. While I wasn't 100 percent sold on the older version of the controls, which ironically made finding the horn a dicey proposition, I missed my paddle-like turn signals. Hand controls, however, are only a hindrance during the adjustment phase; if it takes a few sessions of retraining muscle memory with the bike parked in the garage, so be it.

The first order of business on the GSA was swapping the standard seat (35 inches) with an OEM lowered version (33.9 inches). Even at 5'10" tall with a 33-inch inseam, my tip toes barely touching the ground was not enough for me. I lack a background in dirt, where the need for extended ground clearance forces a rider to grow accustomed to only one foot on the ground. Opting for the lowered seat does not alter the capabilities of the motorcycle, but rather reduces seat comfort by way of less padding. For me, that was a fair trade off and the only option that made sense. I would purchase the standard stock and lowered seat for this motorcycle, with the intention of starting out with the lowered seat to bridge familiarity and confidence before graduating to the standard seat for longer

trips, where seat comfort is key. After all, the stock seat on the GSA is more in line with the plushier comfort seat option on the F650/800GS models. With the balls of my feet firmly planted against the ground using the lowered seat, I was off and running.



I own the F650GS and have ridden the R1200GS, but much like the Goldilocks fairytale, the F800GS Adventure is just right. Engine performance of the 800GS platform marries the best of both worlds: more power than the 650 twin and less weighted down than the R1200GS. I have always viewed my bike's engine as a glass half full, explaining that the 650 is a tuned-up twin such that the displacement is 798 cc. After testing the GSA, which uses the same

liquid-cooled 798 cc four-valve twin-cylinder engine as the F800GS, truth be told the 650 is more like a detuned 800.

In the few weeks I've spent bumming around Southern California on the GSA, the bike has been regularly circled by onlookers when parked and I've been stopped once by the highway patrol. Before you start fabricating a story as to exactly how I exercised the difference in power on the bike, I was "reportedly" pulled over for my out-of-state plates. It may have been a cover for the real issue at hand; I was let go, but not before being peppered with questions about the bike.

Apart from the agile, responsive handling normally expected from the GS family, the visceral reaction to the newly designed GSA could be a result of the aggressive styling of the fairing and added stock features, such as the wider enduro foot rests, wind-shaming hand guards, engine guard, a well-supported and tall windscreen and top and side case pannier frame to pair with optional Touratech panniers. The reinforced rear subframe boasts a larger 6.3 gallon tank with an average fuel consumption of 45 mpg at speeds above 65 mph (for a range of roughly 280 miles). ABS comes standard, and at least on LA freeways, it's a feature you want to have.

The F800GS Adventure lives up to its utilitarian family name by allowing oneself to, in the course of a day, approach multiple surfaces and conditions with no wrenching adjustments required. Just a flick of a but-



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ton employs the (optional) safety and performance features: Electronic Suspension Adjustment (ESA), which comes in three flavors (normal, comfort, and sport), and automatic stability control (ASC). I literally escaped the dregs of claustrophobic city living for a quiet Christmas Eve morning up the coast to Malibu canyon riding in "road" mode with the "sport" ESA option, keeping the suspension a little tighter while cornering.

All that exercise merited a strong coffee, but wait...there's more where that came from. Switching the ESA option to "comfort," I cruised down the open road in the direction of Anza Borrego. After a couple hours of whizzing by densely built cities, outlet malls, windmills and desert terrain, I switched over to "enduro" mode, a pre-set which offers a pared down version of the ABS and ASC systems suited for better acceleration and braking off-road. The end of the pavement was in sight.

http://www.bmwmotorcycle.com/2013_bmw_f800gs-adv_info.htm. ☺

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