

# The sweet spot

How a 35bhp power reduction and 17kg weight loss have made **Ducati's Panigale V2** the ultimate supersport

By Michael Neeves  
CHIEF ROAD TESTER

**D**ucati reckon their latest £16,995 Panigale V2 S can lap a track just as fast as the old one, despite being 35bhp down. Here at its world launch at the Sevilla Circuit in southern Spain, it's easy to see why.

The outgoing version was always a sweet handler, but the new V2, available in dealers now, takes things to a different level. It's 17kg lighter and more agile with friendlier power and a racy chassis that digs in the harder you push it. Riding it fast is easy and the antidote to the fire-breathing, modern day superbike that wants to take you for a ride... and punch you in the ribs along the way.

## Supersport contender

We recently sampled Ducati's new spring valve 890cc V-twin in 114bhp touring guise, powering the latest Multistrada V2. For the Panigale V2 and Streetfighter V2 (full test next month), it makes a slightly fruitier 118bhp.

That figure may not get the hardened sportsbike fan fizzing, especially in a world where superbikes broke the magic 200bhp mark years ago, but 118bhp shouldn't be sniffed at. It's precisely because it doesn't have insane amounts of power that the Panigale V2 is so friendly. It might have more in common with the old 113bhp Supersport 950 on paper, but it's every inch the modern day supersport bike, from the way it carves through corners, darts to apexes and in the speed that the new engine spins up.

## Fresh new V-twin engine

Designed as a new-from-the-ground up machine, rather than just sleeving down an existing superbike, Ducati have been able to make the Panigale V2 light and compact, to get the best out of its relatively modest power delivery. It does that beautifully. Acceleration in the first three gears on a bike weighing just 176kg wet (no fuel) isn't what you'd call sluggish and with its wheelie control turned off it'll loft a front wheel in the first three gears off the throttle.



New swingarm matches the V4

The V-twin loves to yell its brains out, but it oozes grunt, too. Ducati say it produces 70% of its torque at 3000rpm and 80% from 4000rpm all the way to 11,000rpm. The new motor has lost some of its traditional Ducati-ness and doesn't growl and clatter like it used to. As we discovered with the new Multistrada V2, it has a more modern, refined and almost clinical feel and sound to it. The V-twin still roars through its airbox and race-inspired underseat cans, but it's more subtle... which you can blame Euro 5+ for. On the flip side, the power delivery is friendly and controllable, thanks to the way the V-twin is mapped and the superbike-derived electronic rider aids that lurk within.

## Superbike-spec electronics

Riding on Pirelli racing slicks, rather than the standard Diablo Rosso IV tyres for our test, we're blessed with more grip than power and the traction control is never called into play. But the electronics still prove their worth with a silky anti-wheelie system and foolproof cornering ABS. The quickshifter and autoblipper work superbly (we changed the gear pattern to race shift), although there were a few missed gears if we tried to change up too quickly. We also set the new colour dash to Track mode, which highlights revs, gear position, lap times and rider aid tabs that flash when being called into action.

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## Ducati Panigale V2



It has a lust for corner speed...



...and it's so easy to enjoy

'It mixes easy performance with fun'

It's about so much more than that 118bhp figure



## Pin-sharp handling

This high spec V2 S costs £2000 more than the standard model (see box-out) and comes with Öhlins, forks, shock, a lightweight battery and a single seat. It's every inch a track bike, from the accuracy of the steering to the quality of its suspension and hunger for corner speed. Braking performance and stability are impressive and the only part of the V2's make-up that moves it away from being too soft. You'll need all your strength and a little bit more to use them to the max.

In terms of sheer enjoyment, the new Panigale V2 hits the spot. It won't lap a track as fast as a superbike and you'll still have to beware of a 1000cc machine's closing speed on long straights at a trackday, but the reward comes from being able to ride the Ducati close to its limit. We breeze through six sessions here at Seville and barely break a sweat. Compare that to the Panigale V4 we rode at its Vallelunga launch last year: by the end it felt like we'd done 12 rounds with Tyson... both Mike and Fury.

## Travel in comfort

Unlike an old-school supersport race rep, you won't need to double yourself in half to squeeze on the

new Panigale V2. The riding position is sporty and the pegs never graze the tarmac, even on slicks, but legroom is generous, even for tall riders. Raised, widely spaced clip-ons (60mm higher than the old V2's) give you plenty of room to move around and are kinder to your wrists. In fact, Ducati say their MotoGP bike's handlebars are much higher than you'd expect, just so the riders can brace themselves against the huge braking forces. And when some of them use Panigale V4s as training bikes they complain the 'bars are too low!

We didn't get the chance to test the V2 on the road, but it promises to be even more impressive and perhaps the Supersport 950 Ducati should've built in the first place. It mixes easy performance with fun, a not-too-brutal riding position and Ducati say there's far less engine heat spilling out onto the rider than the old machine, too. Road-friendly accessories include cruise control, turn-by-turn navigation, tyre pressure monitors and a USB port.

## Just like Marc's

There's also a Time Attack accessory pack that increases power to 124bhp and reduces weight to 169kg wet, no fuel. It costs £5005.80 and includes



Pinball from apex to apex



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www.mcncompare.com



We love those underseat pipes

a full Termignoni race exhaust, Öhlins steering damper, adjustable billet aluminium rearsets, lower clip-ons, blanking plates for the mirrors and numberplate and engine cover protectors. Ducati's MotoGP royalty Pecco Bagnaia and Marc Marquez are about to take delivery of their Panigale V2s, which they'll use to train on all year, adorned with these goodies.

## You get what you pay for

The Panigale V2 is beautifully built with fastidious attention to detail, deep paint and top-notch chassis parts and electronics... as well it

should be for seventeen grand. You may think that's a lot for 118bhp, but Ducati argue you're paying for the performance and build quality, more than outright power.

## Its biggest rival

Ducati have won the World Supersport championship for the past two years with the old Panigale V2, restricted to 70% throttle due to series balancing rules. So, it makes sense to produce a machine designed to have lower power in the first place, which is one of the reasons the new Panigale V2 exists. It's set to compete with 600cc and

750cc fours, 765cc and 800cc triples and of course Yamaha's eagerly anticipated and much cheaper, new three-cylinder £12,250 R9, which we'll be riding in a few weeks. Like the Ducati, the R9 is a ready-made new generation supersport bike with similar power. KTM's 990 RC R is more of the same, but given the firm's current woes, it's unlikely to appear over the next few months.

With the sun setting over Seville our time on track is done. The Panigale V2 has been a joy, hasn't eaten through piles of tyres and left us some energy to hit the bar to regale stories of derring-do. **MCN**

## TECH SPOTLIGHT

Ducati's new 118bhp, 890cc motor is their lightest and most compact V-twin. It weighs 54.4kg, which is 9.5kg less than the old V2's 153bhp 'Superquadro'. It's far less powerful, but Ducati say it's been designed more for street than track use and fits in nicely with new-generation supersport rules. The new engine is rotated 20 degrees back in the chassis for optimal weight distribution, has variable intake valve timing and hollow-stemmed valves for reduced inertia. Spring actuated valves replace the traditional

Desmo set-up, as seen on the current Multistrada V4.

Ducati say that with the modest revs the V2 runs at it, it doesn't need the complex system, unlike the Panigale V4. Neat underseat cans are reminiscent of their factory superbike's and the Panigale 1299 Final Edition.

The 96mm x 61.5mm bore and stroke sits between the old short-stroke Superquadro V2 and longer-stroke 937cc, 113bhp Testastretta that powered everything from the Monster to the Supersport 950 and DesertX. Ducati claim 53mpg (and

a 175-mile range), but we'll put that to the test when it arrives in the UK soon.

The new engine will also power the 2025 Streetfighter V2 and Multistrada V2 (retuned to make 114bhp), but expect it to roll out to the wider range next year. IMU-controlled electronic rider aids include lean sensitive traction, wheelie and engine brake and control, an up/down quickshifter, three-stage ABS and four riding modes: Race, Sport, Road, Wet. A pitlane speed limiter and launch control are accessories.



New engine is 9.5kg lighter than before



TFT New 5in colour dash has a 16:9 aspect ratio and three display modes: Road, Road Pro and Track, highlighting the relevant information you need.



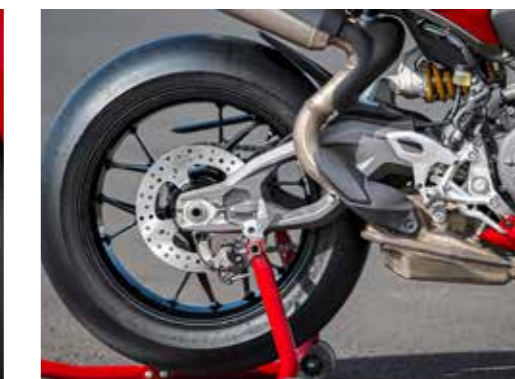
Chassis The V2 uses a cast aluminium mono-coque airbox frame. It features cut-outs for flex, weighs 4kg and uses the engine as a stressed member.



Swingarm It's out with the single-sided swingarm and in with a delicate V4 Panigale-style hollow aluminium double sider, for less weight and more lateral flex.



Brakes Brembo M50 four-piston monoblocs are brutally effective. ABS modes let you disable the rear ABS, or help you slide into corners.



Wheels New cast aluminium 17in wheels with Y-shaped spokes are shod with Pirelli Diablo Rosso IV tyres. Rear has gone up from the old 180/60 to a 190/55.

'It'll loft a front wheel in the first three gears'

Cheeky but not intimidating

## MCN VERDICT

MICHAEL NEEVES  
CHIEF ROAD TESTER

## 'Why 118bhp is just right'

Ducati's new Panigale V2 is a breath of fresh air. It's light, agile, easy to ride and safe, thanks to chassis and electronics know-how from their Panigale V4. It's stable, has an unquenchable lust for corner speed, hits apexes like a pinball and dishes out tricep-busting stopping power. Some may say 118bhp isn't enough, but in reality it's just the right amount to enjoy on the road or track. It's every inch a proper Ducati in the way it handles and stops, but it's one that doesn't try and rip your face off. Its high 'bars, reduced engine heat and all-round specialness should make it a superb road bike, too, although at seventeen grand, only the well-heeled need apply.

## THE FACTS

### £16,995 Ducati Panigale V2 S

Engine	890cc, V-twin
Frame	Aluminium mono-coque
Suspension	43mm Öhlins USD forks and shock. Fully adj
Front brake	2x320mm with four-piston Brembo M50 monobloc radial calipers. Cornering ABS
Rear brake	245mm disc. Cornering ABS
Seat height	837mm

118 bhp @ 10,750rpm	69 lb.ft @ 8,250rpm
176 kg (wet)	15 litres
PCP DEAL £157.71 per month x36	£4292 Total deposit payable
4000 Annual mileage	7.9% APR fixed
	Optional final payment