

Ready, set, adventure!



Can the new KTM 1390 Super Adventure S trump the award-winning Ducati Multistrada V4 S and class-defining BMW R1300GS?

£18,176
KTM 1390 Super Adventure S

- 1350cc liquid-cooled DOHC 8v V-twin
- 173bhp @ 9500rpm
- 247kg weight (kerb, tested)

£25,620
BMW R1300GS
TE Option 719

- 1300cc air/liquid-cooled DOHC 8v flat-twin
- 143bhp @ 7750rpm
- 266kg weight (kerb, tested)

£24,705
Ducati Multistrada V4 S Travel & Radar

- 1158cc liquid-cooled 16v DOHC V4
- 167bhp @ 10,750rpm
- 267kg weight (kerb, tested)



Off road, but not too far...

By Justin Hayzelden
ROAD TESTER

If you want to cover big distances in style and comfort, with a surfeit of performance and prowess to entertain when the mood takes you, then a full-fat litre-plus adventure bike is the only way to travel. We took three of the best on a 48-hour tour of the

lesser-known corners of the Midlands, to find out which one's worthy of top spot on the podium as the best road-focused adventurer.

Heading up the pack is the Ducati Multistrada V4 S, current holder of the MCN award for Best 1000cc+ Adventure Bike. Looking resplendent in Arctic White, this is the Travel and Radar version, which *Continued over*



It's a four or a twin depending on your speed



'There's an immediacy to the Super Adventure'

adds panniers, centrestand, heated grips and seats, and a suite of radar detection aids to the V4 S's already impressive spec. At £24,705, it's a tenner over three grand more than the standard S model and the second most expensive bike here.

Taking that accolade is the BMW R1300GS, which in Option 719 Biscaya trim as tested, would put a £25,620 sized dent in your bank balance. On top of the exclusive 'Imperial blue' metallic paint, gold spoked wheels and chrome header pipe-fed Akrapovic end can, it's bejewelled with trick billet bits, leaving only the luggage boxes to be ticked on BMW's extensive accessory list. Credited as the model that created this class, the GS has defined plus-sized adventure biking for decades.

Which brings us to the newest kid on the block, KTM's 1390 Super Adventure S. It's one of only two variants available, the other being the AMT (Automated Manual Transmission) equipped Evo, and apart from the Tech Pack, which unlocks a host of adjustability for its electronic rider aids, is in stock trim. With a swingtag price of £18,176 as tested, the orange beastie looks a veritable bargain off the bat, but lacks the heated accessories, centrestand, adaptive ride height or radar assisted cruise that the other bikes share. Add them as extras and you'll still get change from £20k, apart from the auto ride height function which isn't available

(although manually selectable low, mid and high electronic preload settings can be accessed via the Tech Pack).

Fuelled up and ready to rock at MCN Towers, our trio stand tall as an impressive complement of some seriously technologically advanced metal. As the GS is practically the industry standard, I grab its keyless fob first, leaving fellow testers Jon and Adam to fight it out over the Multistrada and Super Adventure for our initial dual carriageway-based stretch.

Once considered a behemoth among bikes, the latest iteration of BMW's stalwart adventurer actually cuts the smallest silhouette, in this company at least. That's largely down to the more squat stature prescribed by its trademark boxer twin, and accentuated when the suspension drops to assist with clambering aboard and low-speed manoeuvring. A super comfy saddle makes parking your rear a pleasure and once tucked in behind the electrically adjustable screen I find myself in a cosy cocoon that I'd happily occupy for a full tank of fuel and then some.

The German firm's instantly recognisable TFT dash and clickwheel 'joystick' are entrenched in BMW tradition – they take a bit of getting used to but become second nature soon enough. A nice touch is the favourites button, which allows you to allocate a particular function, such as heated accessories

or the screen, to a dedicated up/down rocker switch for quick adjustments on the go. At 70mph in top, the 143bhp GS wafts along to make light work of a slog on the M6, and at our first fuel stop I take the opportunity to hear how the others have been doing.

"The Multistrada's got a really intuitive interface," says Adam, "when I first jumped on it, I had to quickly turn off all the heated elements and, despite not reading the manual, managed to work out which buttons did what via the on-screen menus within one cycle of traffic lights. It's comfortable too, and that V4 engine is mega smooth."

"You sit tall behind the KTM's big tank," adds Jon. "It feels like a proper adventure bike, but can be a handful at lower speeds. Although the engine chugs a bit around town,



Big in stature, lower in price

GET PROTECTED!
What will it cost to get insurance? We ran quotes based on an average risk UK rider through MCN Compare for fully comprehensive cover to get an indication of costs:
Multistrada V4 S £566.15
R1300GS TE £1116.64
Super Adv S £484.74

MCN COMPARE



Benchmark boxer still packs a punch

the vibes even right out on the motorway and that massive touch-screen dash is brilliant."

Jon's words ring true as I take over on Super Adventure duties, and it's instantly noticeable that KTM have done a grand job in bringing some sanity to the previous, overtly sporty, 1290 model. It's perfectly civilised for battering out motorway miles, the screen being particularly effective for staving off fatigue, but even so, its rorty roots are never far away. Crack open the throttle for an overtake and anything in the mirrors becomes a blur as you dip

into the phenomenal 173bhp of pull from its mighty 1350cc V-twin. The adjustable seat is broad and flat, and I find it most comfortable on the taller setting, where my 32in inside leg has ample dangle room for a lazy and unstressed footpeg position. It does make for a long stretch to the ground though, and stopping at junctions becomes a slightly precarious one-footed affair. Of the three, the KTM's screen is the fuzziest to adjust via its rotary knobs, but the task can be done with either hand.

When I get a chance to try the

Ducati on for size, I'm initially a little underwhelmed. Despite the fact that it feels supremely capable of whisking you down to Lake Garda in an ambience of Italian-designed comfort and style, it doesn't strike an instant chord in the way the BMW or KTM does. The 1158cc, 167bhp 'Granturismo' V4 seems a bit too sanitised as we slip along at the speed limit, which may be because the rear bank of cylinders shuts down to improve fuel economy and reduce heat in certain situations – not that you'll notice without paying attention.

Continued over

ADVENTURE DETAILS



DUCATI
The Multi's mighty V4 engine is smooth, tractable and howls magnificently when provoked. The Italian bike's quickshifter action is precise and clunk free.



Adaptive ride height courtesy of the Skyhook. Fork stroke rate sensors pre-warn the shock of sudden bumps.



Linked Brembos are impressive, but the front bias can feel pronounced when you are using the rear in a turn.



BMW
The low-mounted boxer twin packs a heavyweight punch from low revs and adds to the overall sensation of stability. Gearshifts can feel rather abrupt.



Electronically damped suspension prevents pitching. Auto lowering adds low-speed convenience.



Radial Sports Brakes make short work of moderating momentum, with a precise and progressive feel.



KTM
KTM's latest V-twin is an explosive powerhouse of raw energy but also manages to feel friendly and accessible. Shifts are slick, but the lever is set fairly high.



Semi-active suspension keeps the ride sporty and taut, with ride height adjustable via rear preload settings.



New Brembo calipers and a revised pad compound arm the KTM with a chunky bite for assured braking.

RADAR LOVE

'Tag onto your target'

The latest 'must have' is adaptive radar-assisted cruise control, which was developed by Bosch and pioneered by Ducati on the 2021 Multistrada. Variants are available on all three of our contenders, with the fundamental function of allowing the bike to tag onto whatever vehicle you're following and remain behind it at a preset distance, with some adjustability as to how close you want to get.

The Multistrada and GS also get rear sensors, which gives them the advantage for blindspot monitoring, but while their radars will disengage below 20mph (18.6mph/30kmh to be exact), the KTM system (not fitted to our test bike, but available for £724.02) is designed to bring the bike to a complete stop and, provided the



GS keeps an eye on traffic

vehicle in front moves off quickly enough, get you rolling again. What proved particularly impressive on our road test was how accurately the radar can track on a twisty, single carriageway A-road, remaining locked onto the target vehicle even when negotiating tight, hedge-lined turns – and unlike most conventional cruise systems, you can also change gear to suit the road speed without it disconnecting.

Interestingly, it took a higher level of concentration to sit back and let the system do the work than it does in maintaining a naturally comfortable following distance yourself.



Ducati are radar pioneers

That said, you could easily argue that the Multistrada's slickness makes it the ideal steed for long distance transit work, and while not as plush as the Beemer's, the seat is certainly a perfectly acceptable place to spend time between fill-ups. One hand is all it takes to slide the screen up and down, which, regardless of position, isn't totally free of cruising speed turbulence.

Once our bellies are sated at Much Wenlock, and with the twisty tarmac of the Shropshire Hills at our disposal, each bike's individual character really starts to shine. I stay on the Ducati because I'm keen to discover what all the fuss is about, and that decision to persevere does not disappoint. Some bikes take a while to unlock, and, as it turns out, that's part of the V4 S's charm. As soon as you start getting busier with control inputs, the Multistrada comes alive, from its gloriously addictive induction howl to the surefooted grace with which it confidently carves up bends. An internal sensor in the Marzocchi forks monitors stroke rate data and passes that to the rear shock, allowing it to effectively adjust preload instantaneously to compensate for changes in the road surface. As a result it's classy, capable and flatteringly fast.

But while it takes some effort to crack the Ducati's code, there's an unimposing immediacy to KTM's Super Adventure that, given its fearsome spec and the Austrian firm's reputation for bonkers street

bikes, is rather unexpected. The semi-active suspension doesn't feel quite as advanced as the Ducati kit in Street mode, allowing the shock to bounce a little too much over bumps, but dial it up to Sport and the firmer chassis demonstrates just how adept at slicing through corners it can be.

Throttle response, while accurate, unleashes a torrent of giggling madness that's as intoxicating as it is involving, and it's virtually impossible to hustle along on the KTM without a soppy great grin on your face.

And so to the GS, which has always been something of a sleeper among seemingly sportier competition. With 110lb.ft of torque on tap from its 1300cc flat twin at just 6500rpm, it has the most grunt here, and when you combine that with the unique geometry of its electronically damped Telelever/Paralever suspension, you get a bike with military-spec agility. There's no pitching back and forth from either brake or throttle inputs, the big BMW simply rolls through bends, remaining reassuringly stable and level throughout.

There is a slight sensation that the chassis is working hard to do that, especially under heavy braking, but it's almost as if it's someone else's problem to keep everything trimmed out – and a fine job they do of it. However, whilst the KTM and Ducati have sweet, soft snicking quick shifters, the GS's gearbox is clunky, often hoofing between ratios with a savage abruptness that can be unsettling. **MCN**



'Horsepower? That's my thing'



'Okay, so who's going first?'



THE HOTTEST BIKES EVERY WEEK

FUEL FACTS

Ducati Multistrada V4 S	BMW R1300GS TE	KTM 1390 Super Adventure S
201.8 miles	178 miles	196.3 miles
22-litre tank	19-litre tank	23-litre tank
41.7 AVG. MPG	42.6 AVG. MPG	38.8 AVG. MPG
165.1 MILES TO RESERVE	122.4 MILES TO RESERVE	159.9 MILES TO RESERVE

'The R1300GS has military-spec agility'



You won't want the ride to stop

DIVE IN TO THE DETAIL

★★★★★



£24,705 Ducati Multistrada V4 S Travel & Radar

Engine	1158cc liquid-cooled DOHC 16v V4
Frame	Cast aluminium monocoque
Suspension	F: 50mm USD forks, semi-active damping and mechanically adjustable preload R: Monoshock, electronically adjustable
Front brake	2x 330mm discs with Brembo Stylema four piston monoblocs. Cornering ABS
Rear brake	280mm disc with Brembo two-piston caliper. Cornering ABS
Seat height	840-860mm

167 bhp @ 10,750rpm

92 lb.ft @ 9000rpm

267 kg (kerb)

22 litres

PCP DEAL	£185 per month x36	£6131.95 Total deposit payable	3000 Annual mileage	4.9% APR fixed	£14,349 Optional final payment
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★★★★★



£25,620 BMW R1300GS TE Option 719

Engine	1300cc air/liquid-cooled DOHC 8v flat-twin
Frame	Pressed steel shell with cast aluminium subframe
Suspension	F: Telelever with non-adjustable single spring R: Paralever with single spring adjustable for preload and rebound
Front brake	2x 310mm discs with four-piston radial calipers. Cornering ABS
Rear brake	285mm disc with two-piston caliper. Cornering ABS
Seat height	850mm

143 bhp @ 7700rpm

110 lb.ft @ 6500rpm

266 kg (kerb)

19 litres

PCP DEAL	£341.15 per month x36	£5124 Total deposit payable	4000 Annual mileage	7.9% APR fixed	£12,337.08 Optional final payment
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KTM's 8in TFT sets the bar at almost twice the size of the BMW and Ducati units, with touchscreen functionality.

FUNCTIONALITY AND FEATURES

	Clocks	Switches	Mirrors
Ducati	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BMW	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
KTM	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆

★★★★★



£18,176 KTM 1390 Super Adventure S

Engine	1350cc liquid-cooled DOHC 8v V-twin
Frame	Steel trellis
Suspension	F: 48mm WP SAT Semi-active inverted forks, R: WP SAT Semi-active monoshock
Front brake	2x 267mm disc with Brembo two-piston caliper and cornering ABS
Rear brake	267mm disc with Brembo two-piston caliper and cornering ABS
Seat height	847-867mm

173 bhp @ 9500rpm

107 lb.ft @ 8000rpm

247 kg (kerb)

23 litres

PCP DEAL	£280.45 per month x36	£3999 Total deposit payable	4000 Annual mileage	9.4% APR fixed	£7862.50 Optional final payment
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MCN VERDICT

JUSTIN HAYZELDEN ROAD TESTER

'Multi's one to savour'

Each of these bikes meets the brief for involving and effective adventure touring, but they all do it in their own way. To best illustrate that, let's say you have a business meeting 300 miles away. Take the R1300GS and you'll arrive almost as fresh as you left, ready to stroll right in and clinch the deal. By contrast, the Super Adventure's rawness has the effect of leaving you brimming with excitable energy.

Swing a leg over the Multistrada, and while the others are parking up you've phoned ahead to reschedule, and are halfway to the Alps.

As the newest bike here, the KTM has the most work to do, and although it's more well-rounded than its predecessor, there's still a tough, sporty focus – and even though it's the cheapest by some margin, that alone is not enough. The difference between the BMW and Ducati almost comes down to personal choice, but because there are those depths to the Multistrada that take time to get with, there's more to savour, and for me that gives it the edge for taking the win.



Just, erm, cleaning the tyres...

LIKES

- KTM's refined rawness
- BMW's unflappability
- Ducati's class and ability

DISLIKES

- KTM's loftiness
- GS's abrupt quickshifter
- Multi's tiny phone cubby