

Riding the Suzuki GS650G

by Ron Hurd

No, it's not the largest, or the fastest, or the lightest, or the most sporty, or some might argue even the most handsome and today certainly not the newest, spend a little time aboard a GS650G and discover its many fine qualities.....let's go for a ride.

Enrichener on, ignition on, pull the clutch lever in, press the start button and the engine jumps to life almost instantly. Within just a few seconds the enrichener can be set to off with the engine settling into a slow, smooth idle. And the engine, compared to many of its contemporaries, runs so quietly!

Slip into first gear and we're off on what in my estimation is one of the best-tuned Suzuki GS models as delivered from the factory. Notice the smooth, responsive engine and highly accurate carburetion. And wow, the suspension is nicely compliant providing a smooth, comfortable ride. Other nice touches include a digital gear indicator and fuel gauge (on most models).

All warmed up now, let's have a little fun. A full throttle blast through 2 or 3 gears shifting at 9000rpm will have one wondering "is this thing really just a 650, and a shaft-drive machine at that?!" Plus, it's around 30 years old, what a performer for that age!

Curves up ahead? No problem, it's no GSX-R but a nicely balanced chassis and accurate steering make the twisties fun. And again, that shaft drive? There just seems to be no performance penalty at all!

Just cruising along enjoying the scenery on a little-used back road? Select 5th (top) gear and leave it there. Notice how nicely responsive and torquey the engine is at low rpm.

A 20kph curve coming up? No need to downshift, after the curve apply just a slight touch of throttle and from 1200 rpm or even lower the engine and drive train respond with smooth acceleration. Apply a little more throttle and within a few seconds you'll be zipping along at 100kph or more. And, remember, you never shifted out of 5th gear! Plus, you gotta love that direct-drive top gear, where the engine is coupled directly to the rear wheel, essentially bypassing the transmission gears.

The downside to the GS650G? Some examples tend to seep a little oil from the cylinder head gasket (generally not serious), a minor amount of engine oil consumption is common as is a high-frequency buzz through the handlebar at highway cruising speeds, primarily on bikes with accessory bars installed. Although, as my bike approaches (and has now passed) 24000 miles on the odometer, the buzz is virtually non-existent with the stock handlebar and it has never run smoother.

No, it's not the fastest, newest, lightest, etc. but the GS650G is still a mighty fine ride. I hope to be enjoying mine for many years to come!

Ron Hurd
Denver, Colorado, USA
June 2011
Website: <http://www.ronh.org/>
Email: ron@ronh.org

