

Adventure Readers! Today will be my first attempt at **FICTION** writing. Yes, as “great fiction” we had **Raiders of the Lost Ark** and today we have the **KTM 990 Adventure-motorcycle Fiction Road Test** (because, in reality, “nobody ever speeds”).

KTM of Austria is the maker of world-class “adventure motorcycles”. These are bikes capable of traversing the Sahara, Siberia, Patagonia, wherever and they look like this...



Note the huge suspension travel, knobby tires, hard-panniers.

KTM brought a *huge* factory exhibit, and 10 motorcycles for demo...



The location is the Mammoth Ski Area in Mammoth Lakes CA.

Today also happened to be opening day of the mountain-bicycle season, and the first day the gondola was used to haul bicycles up to the top of the mountain at 11,000'. Below is the view from inside the gondola station...



Note in the below picture that the line is very short, only because it was early. By 11am the wait was approx 15 minutes...



The above pic shows mostly-kids, not usually the case.

The atmosphere is **very festive** and a zillion people were having a great time.

In the below pic, instructors were giving rock-climbing lessons, and you can see the dozens of rental-bicycles...



Below is a pic from yesterday, *real* rock-climbers at Yosemite...



Oh did you say ***no big deal?*** Hmmm check out the below pic, look above my bike, the “dots on the rock” are climbers!



Pretty neat eh? The full story is coming, **Sonora Loop**.

Getting back to KTM...



...there was also a contingent from KTM Adventure Tours, who will rent you a KTM to use in their cross-country (meaning “on dirt, in-the-woods”) school.

Here I am! On my ***KTM Adventure 990***. This is a **\$15,000 motorcycle** exclusive of the inevitable \$2,000 in options. With tax/license etc, **this is a \$20,000 rig!**



These are very light, sophisticated (fuel-injection, trip-computers, ABS Anti-skid Braking System), ***100+ horsepower machines!***

The pic below shows the ABS sensor-ring (“slots”), **ABS being a feature without which I *will not* buy a new motorcycle...**



The below two pics show me (again, show-off that I am) and note I am not yet wearing my protective gear. My ride-time was an hour away and it was getting hot. In fact I had my armored jacket, leg-armor, boots/gloves and helmet.



Here's the instrument/computer screen (very sophisticated)...



And so, while waiting to ride... “Interesting diversions”....

The guy below, upon my admiring his bike (a Suzuki V-Strom, one of my favorites) asked if I would like a **FREE TICKET** to the Sunday National Moto-Cross Races *sure you bet!* This is worth \$20 to me, this fellow was only attending one day (Saturday) and he had a tour-package... Great guy!



Ha! This is so cool! I met many many neat people. I love the dirt-bike-experience!

The Suzuki above can be had with ABS, at ***half-price to the KTM's!***

Also in attendance were the **Red Bull Girls** who were oh-so-happy to mug for anyone with a camera (and please don't ask me "Why is the **Red Bull** truck **blue**?").



Walking about, I came across a neat couple w/dogs, trying to get a pic. He had the "wrong lens" and so I volunteered a digi-pic from my camera... Here it is!



I gave my email, and do hope they check-in!

Next we had a short riders' meeting, describing the route and rules ("**No wheelies!**" and *No-passing! Single-file!*). We were led by a KTM guide in a bright-orange vest. Off-we-rode (I went back afterwards with my digicam, to get pics of the route)...

Coming downhill toward the camera, we exited the corners at the top of the pic at 62mph, hit **82mph** on the straightaway...



Heading downhill (toward the oncoming rider in the below pic, who would have been terrified to see 10 riders hurtling toward him), we leaned-in at 60+ (how “plus”? I wasn’t looking at the speedo!).



Also on the entry to the route, as I was setting up for a pic, another demo-group came along. Look at the bend in the road (not much) compared to the lean-angle of the rider (plenty!) wow this guy is ***flying!***



After the scenic-loop (“twisty road”) we returned via Rt.395, a 65mph-limit sort-of-freeway. ***I hit 98mph chasing the leader!***

On my picture-taking loop, I attempted (on my “mighty GSX-1100G” to duplicate my KTM highway-acceleration; ***No-can-do!***). Where the KTM made 98mph, my GSX-1100G could only make 88mph!

The KTM 990 Adventure was **significantly faster** than my so-called (and 10% larger-displacement) “Power Cruiser”.

Holy S*T!**

In defense of my poor Suzuki, it is a carbureted bike, the KTM is fuel-injected, and the altitude was 8,000’ (where, to put it bluntly, “carburetors suck”).

KTM observations:

- 1) The fuel-injection low-speed calibration is abrupt. On/off throttle at low speeds is “jerky” and distracting. In time, this would be accommodated *but* this is a known flaw and Japanese fuel-injection bikes do not suffer this (or, at worst, “not so bad”).
- 2) A companion rider (estimated 170-lbs) said “This is the most comfortable seat ever!” **I thought it sucked.** Too narrow, and very sloped-forward. This can easily be solved via an aftermarket seat (Corbin etc). **Seat-vibration made my “manhood-thingie” go numb.**
- 3) No rear-wheel torque-limiter. This is a serious flaw in a \$15K motorcycle. The idle calibration (“zero-throttle”) means that

when down-shifting at low speeds, the rear-wheel will momentarily skid (“chirp”) before it gains traction and “spins up”. I discovered this in my first turn-in, following the leader. Scenario: 30-degree-bank, 30-mph, downshift, rear-wheel-skid. **Terrifying**. Most upscale superbikes (Ducati and Suzuki for sure, certainly others) do have this torque-limiter feature.

- 4) The bike, as-g geared, cannot maintain speeds under 10mph without slipping the clutch. The KTM is geared too-high. A 1-tooth-smaller countershaft sprocket would likely cure this, while having no-impact on high-speed-cruise. The fuel-injection low speed “on/off” tendency makes very-low-speeds a hassle. “Super-jerky”.

Would I buy this bike? ***Sure, if Patagonia was the destination.*** As a daily-driver? Overkill. I can buy both a Suzuki 650 V-Strom (“adventure-tourer” like the KTM) and Suzuki DR-650 (“dual-sport” dirt-bike) for the same money as one KTM 990 Adventure. And for American riding, I’d be far better off.

But then again, both Suzuki’s together won’t get me to Patagonia!

Hmmm... And where-exactly is Patagonia?



!And now... Food

My faithful Suzuki GSX-1100G (which took me 355 stress-free miles, in comfort, yesterday) delivered me to my favorite Mammoth ...eatery, **Red's**



Sunday is the Motocross Race, Monday is bicycles. Stay tuned!

Paul P.