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Arai Tour-X4 Helmet

Ready for anything.

Five months and more than 4,000 km on the road and trails across the Alps and in all weathers through Patagonia: the Arai Tour-X4 has been firmly ensconced upon my shoulders. In my opinion, the Tour-X4 is the best helmet I've ever owned. Why? There are plenty of good reasons: The helmet fits like a pair of well

worn hiking boots—securely, but without any pressure points. It is well-balanced and you really don't notice the weight. Ventilation is excellent, even the small vents in the visor channel air to the brow; the chin vent is effective and can be directed either up toward the visor or to send a flow of air across your face.

Equipped with a Pinlock insert the visor can be set in three positions and is secured against inadvertent opening, i.e., if you should crash. If I'm riding off-road and want to wear MX goggles, I don't need to remove the visor—this is a big advantage on dusty Patagonian trails. The biggest plus has to be the chin spoiler: this is not a gimmick. The spoiler can be pulled out steplessly with two fingers. Until now, I've only come across foam-filled strips of cloth that were fixed with either Velcro or studs; either you got your nose caught on them or, once removed, they landed in a pocket and were quickly forgotten. Consequently, I've never really taken chin spoilers seriously. Until recently, on a very wet and windy day in Patagonia, I pulled the spoiler down as far as it would go and all of a sudden, the interior of the helmet was much more bearable.

This Arai helmet also offers a washable Dry-Cool lining, removable pads around the cheeks, temples and ears, plenty of room for your ears and glasses, emergency release of the cheek pads, one shell for two helmet sizes, and five years warranty. First-class Japanese workmanship typical of one of the oldest helmet manufacturers in the world. This is definitely worth trying on if you are an adventure bike rider looking for an ideal helmet.

FROM €500 | ARAIHELMET.EU

Held Air n Dry Glove

+Gore 2in1 Technology

Held Air n Dry have been protecting my hands in all weathers for the last three years. Unusual about this glove is the two chamber system. The lower chamber doesn't have a lined palm in favour of more feeling on warm days. If the temperature drops or it's raining, you just slip into the upper chamber with its waterproof Gore-Tex membrane and insulated lining.

The palm is made of perforated kangaroo leather for improved ventilation and grip. The ball of the hand and the sides are reinforced. Slightly moulded, the fit is firm and comfortable, with Velcro adjusters at the wrist and on the cuff.

The workmanship is excellent and with availability in six standard sizes, as well as four long and short variants, most people should find an ideal fitting.

€200 | HELD.DE



The new BMW F 850 GS feels quite light and the fairing is well tailored. The windscreen is small, almost petite compared to those of the similar bikes from the competition. The seating position is also comfortable for those of us taller than 1.85 m; I took the higher Rallye seat from the list of accessories which at 890 mm is quite high but elegantly slim.

My 850 GS has been treated to a full package of accessories. The TFT screen is easy to read and the navigation system is controlled by a wheel on the left-hand grip meaning I don't have to take my hand off if I want to zoom in and out. The TFT display offers a host of configurations and possibilities: you can pair your phone with it to leaf through your contacts, make or receive calls, and listen to music. I don't actually need any of those features and am happy I can read the display even under a relentless sun. And if you should feel inclined to push the engine to its rev-limiter, everything beautifully lights up in red.

The bike rides well and is nimble for a machine weighing the best part of 230 kg. But that doesn't really come as a surprise when you consider the stationary weight of a 1200 GS...once it's moving, it too seems to shed a lot of those cumbersome kilos.

I don't need to say much about the 95 horsepower other than they are more than adequate for most situations, especially as the engine really picks up in the low and mid rev range.

According to the display, my bike consumed an average of 4.4 litres of fuel per hundred km during the 4,000 km test. With a tank capacity of approx. 15 litres, the bike is good for more than 300 km.



Photos courtesy of BMW Motorrad

BMW F 850 GS

Peter, Overland Journal contributor and test rider, was given a brand new F 850 GS to evaluate both on and off the pavement. 4,000 km later, this is what he has to say.

I rode the 850 GS across mountain passes and trails, along highways and mingled with urban traffic, and I must say that BMW's team have done an excellent job and created a bike worthy of the GS title. The off-road performance is really convincing with the forks responding well, regardless of the terrain, and providing good feedback to the rider. I was always well aware of what the Metzeler tyres were up to.

The last time I went on a lengthy tour lasting several months was nearly a decade ago. I started in Canada, rode down to South Carolina and continued along the Transamerica Trail across the US to Oregon. Nearly 6,000 km off the pavement. From Oregon I headed south through Central America until I reached Argentina. I was traveling on a GS 1100 which turned out to be quite a heavy machine for the task.

Next year I have my sights set on the Continental Divide Trail, an off-road trip

from Canada to Mexico. And this time the ideal bike would be the 850 GS. But with normal instruments in place of the TFT display. I prefer the swoop of the rev counter needle so that I can see how the engine is working; and I have no ambitions to use a phone or listen to music whilst I'm on the move.

ABS Pro including the Pro riding modi will be part of my setup because the dynamic traction control and cornering ABS proved useful when I left the tarmac. I also like the soft throttle in Enduro mode. A centre stand and heated grips complete my list of accessories, bringing the final price close to € 13,000. The base model comes with an LED headlamp but not the LED indicators—which is good because if the bike should end up on its side, a broken indicator can be repaired with a piece of yellow plastic and a new 12V/5W bulb, even in Nicaragua. If an LED indicator breaks, that's it—you can't repair it.



One big advantage and safety aspect are the tubeless rims and tyres. “But you can repair a tube,” I hear you murmur. That applies to tubeless tyres as well—and often faster than you can take the wheel off the bike. Even the most hardened tubed riders must admit it’s no fun when your front tyre suddenly deflates in a corner at 80 km/h because you picked up a nail along the way. Bang...the pressure is gone and the tube tyre is flat; you can be thankful if you don’t end up taking a dive.

Under the same circumstances, the tubeless tyre will start hissing and you won’t even notice the difference to begin with; and when you do, there’s still time to pull over. More often than not, you’ll only notice that sharp culprit the following morning at home, just as you’re about to leave to go to work. Of course that’s not good, but it sure beats ploughing a furrow next to the road with your helmet because the flat tyre wouldn’t let you keep things upright. If you really want to add a tube, BMW’s rims have the valve positioned centrally.

I would also add wide enduro footpegs and the folding brake pedal (which should become available in the autumn, just in time for the launch) for riding standing up.

My colleagues and I covered plenty of kilometres in Sardinia together with a number of international BMW dealers. Aaron from Florida, Scott from Oregon, Christian from Germany, Luigi from Italy, and Stephane from France; ask your dealer if he was there and then ask him what he thought of the new F 850 GS. To quote a BMW dealer from India who dared to take the passenger seat with me: “Thank you very much, Peter. Now I know what the motorcycle can do...but my heart came out of my mouth.”

What else can I say...

FROM €11,700 | BMW-MOTORRAD.COM

Clockwise from top left: Peter Fischer rode the 850 GS in Sardinia, Italy. TFT display. The Metzeler Kangoo 3 tyres. That proves it: over 4,000 km test drive. Riding the Trans-america Trail in 2008 on a BMW 1100 GS. If the folding brake pedal isn’t available, this is my solution. If there’s enough demand, I’ll start a small production run. Not ideal, but it worked: two plugs next to each other.

Opening page: The new BMW F 850 GS.



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