

When in Albania visiting a town that the charity I work with has been helping for some years I was taken for a ride around the town on a 400 Burgman by our man on the spot and was impressed with the handling and comfort even ridden in a very exuberant way so when I was looking for a different bike I researched Suzuki Burgman and bought a 2001 AN 400 from a dealer in Barnet north London for £1500 . On the road in March and following several hundred miles and some extras fitted, (panniers, backrest, extra top box, tunnel bag, throttle lock type cruise control and 12 volt socket and a cable for heated gloves) I was ready for the trip to the FIM Motocamp in Croatia via a camping weekend near Brugge in late May. The ride was good and apart from a couple of holdups caused by heavy rain getting to the electrics, sorted with WD40. In early July I saw a similar model almost complete on Ebay and bought it for £200, good tyres and no crash damage, as the early models spares were not common. A good decision as it turned out, perhaps! The next big trip the FIM Rally at Trakai in Lithuania started well, leaving home at 6 am and as I joined the A14 I was catching a slow truck and shut down quickly and the engine stopped, no obvious reason so suspecting a broken drive belt or worse I got recovered home by 8 am and swapped everything onto the Triumph Trophy and after fueling up was on the way by just after 9 am. When after I returned I stripped the drive side down I found that the belt had dropped in between the flanges of the driven pulley, probably when I shut down the spring that closes the flanges was a bit slow and the belt got caught. A new belt £ 79.00 and all well again.

Late August travelling towards Leicester on the A6 at about 65 mph a sort of "purrrp" noise and all quiet and no drive, recovered home and on strip down found a destroyed engine, con rod broken off just below the little end, piston in pieces after being smashed into cylinder head!!! Time to fit the engine of the second purchase.

Many more fast miles until 7 th November when almost into Mansfield, Nott's and the "Purrrp" noise again at around 65 mph, again no drive and engine not turning over, on strip down almost the same damage, broken con rod etc.

About 6,000 miles on the first engine and 2,500 on the second, say £1,800 for 8,500 miles is that depreciation on a new bike of £10,000? maybe.

Analysis of Burgman ownership: remember it is badged as a "Luxury Urban Commuter" I was probably being unkind to it.

Performance, Top of 90 occasionally with a constant 75/80 across Germany and Austria keeping up with a big Ducati.

Consumption, 70/75 mpg whatever speed.

Carrying capacity, it came with a fair sized top box and the under seat storage takes one full face helmet on this model plus a tool kit, first aid kit and some odds and ends and there are two small cubby boxes in the front panel. I added panniers and another top box on the dual seat, and tunnel bag. all up the boxes filled weighed around 50 Kg (less than a pillion!)

Comfort, excellent, after a couple of hours on the Triumph Trophy I get a pain across the back of the neck, on the Burg no problems especially as I fitted a backrest because as I am 6 ft 1" and at first I felt I was hanging on leaning backwards.

Weather protection, slightly better than the fully faired Triumph even with the standard screen which a lot of owners replace with a bigger GIVI one, heated gloves are a must though.

Handling, Very good due to low centre of gravity even though it is a fairly heavy bike to push about without the engine running. Fully loaded some sparks from the centre stand on fast bumpy corners let you know you are close to the limit.

Spares, under normal circumstances! Tyres are about half the price of big bike ones the drive belt £79 against £130 for the triumph chain and sprockets, although I don't know about the comparative life of these components.

Safety, In the case of a blow up a chain driven bike it locks up and you are off, so I am told. In both of the Burg. ones it just coasts to a stop quietly (apart from the swearing!). I haven't fallen off but as you are inside the bodywork I would think a lowish speed slide you would get away fairly lightly?

Would I buy another one??? Yes, but a much later model as I am of the opinion that these early models were fragile (as I have found) and the later ones were extensively modified. Suzuki didn't send the 400 into the USA until 2003 so there are no forum stories about the early models from there and the UK owners' website is almost non-existent regarding Burgs.

In over fifty years of motorcycling I have never destroyed an engine (even in some of the really scrappy bikes I have had).

So, I had better start saving up for another as I still think they are a brilliant concept.

Bob Osborn.