

Pirelli Scorpion Trail motorcycle tyre review

BY MARK HINCHLIFFE IN BIKE ACCESSORIES · GEAR/ACCESSORIES — 28 FEB, 2014

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Pirelli Scorpion Trail tyres on my BMW R 1200 GS Rallye

You'll go a long way trying to wear out Pirelli's Scorpion Trail motorcycle tyres, even on a heavy 1200cc adventure bike on rough roads with luggage on board. I know I have.

The suppliers, [Link International](#), have been hounding me for months for my review of the tyres, but I simply haven't been able to write it because the hoops have refused to wear out. I've had these motorcycle tyres on for about 6000km since last winter and done a fair bit of rough gravel tracks where I enjoy nothing more than sliding the back end out of corners.

Have a look at the pictures for the condition of the tyres now. I reckon I could still get another few thousand out of them, which is pretty good going for a heavy BMW R 1200 GS Rallye, usually with a pillion on the back (on tar) and a bit of weekend luggage and a bad attitude on board over the rougher trails.



Back tyre after 6000km



Front tyre after 6000km

In fact, for reasons that are obscure (I've got itchy feet), I'm selling the GS. And I'll be selling it with these tyres on board because they still have plenty of legal life left in them. What's more, I've got a spare Scorpion Trail I'll throw in with them as I had it on the bike when Link offered me the full set for review.

But back to these motorcycle tyres. I had come from running a set of knobby tyres on the bike even though I was mainly running around town with the bike, picking up test machines and leaving my bike behind, or taking my wife for long rides on country tar roads. The knobbies very quickly ran out of life and had to be replaced without getting much of a shoot-out in anger on the dirt. For a short time afterwards I ran a mismatched set of road-oriented tyres, including the Scorpion front lent by a friend.

When I bolted on the Pirellis together, they opened my eyes (and ears) to how important it is to match front and back tyres. Suddenly the bike gripped more consistently on the tar. And all the way to the edge even with a pillion and some luggage. They were also confidence inspiring in the wet; the tread pattern, pumping the excess water to the tyre edge. I mentioned my ears because the tyres are so much quieter than knobbies when riding on the highway and that reduces dangerous fatigue on long trips.



It was weeks before I took my bike off road and that's when it hit me. I'd been running around on tyres designed for 75% dirt-25% tar, yet my riding was 90% bitumen and 10% dirt, probably like most of the owners of these big "adventure" bikes. Thankfully my first foray was on decomposed granite tracks. When I hit the dirt, I did so at full pelt, forgetting I wasn't on knobbies. It was a few minutes before I remembered the tyres, but by then I had realised that knobbies aren't much use on these sorts of roads, anyway. The surface is very slippery, but thin and the knobbies simply can't dig in and grip. However, the

Pirellis provided plenty of predictable slide. At the end of the run, a colleague on another Rallye, but shod with knobbies, asked me how I managed to go so fast on "those tyres". "Pure talent," I told him. "You need to practise more."

But seriously, I wasn't at all perturbed by the behaviour of the tyres. And when a few weeks later we hit some loose gravel roads, again I didn't have too many dramas. In fact, here I found the tyres were actually better when the bike had some lean as the tread pattern has wider grooves toward the sides. However, they were quite skittish in the centre when hitting the brakes.

Obviously, they are no good in mud, damp clay or sand. For that, you need specialist tyres. But for most of the dirt roads we do, these road-oriented dual-purpose motorcycle tyres fit the bill nicely. Unfortunately, too many owners of these big adventure juggernauts ride around on knobbies that are

terrible in the wet, horrid at two-up, loud on the highway and have a short life-span. They'd be far better off bolting on a pair of these and enjoying 90% of their ride ... for longer.



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