

Eric on DR350

Eric on his "new" 1999 DR350

**KTM 450/525**  
Weight... 249  
HP... 50  
Cost New... \$8000  
3 years old... \$3000



**Husqvarna TE450**  
Weight... 242  
HP... 44  
Cost New... \$7000  
3 years old... \$3000



**Honda XR650R**  
Weight... 277  
HP... 43  
Cost New... \$6000  
3 years old... \$3000



**Suzuki 650**  
Weight... 324  
HP... 43  
Cost New... \$5600  
3 years old... \$3000



**BMW XCountry**  
Weight... 347  
HP... 44  
Cost New... \$8500  
Introduced in 2007



## Choosing a Dual Sport Bike

If you are contemplating a new dual-sport mount, how do you choose? To make that determination you should carefully consider just how you intend to use the machine, as it's all a matter of compromise. At one extreme a touring bike would be a wallowing sow off the pavement (quite literally, as you and your buddies tried to wrestle the humongous beast out of a piddling mud-hole or sand-trap), and if you were to ride a fly-weight factory motocross bike on the interstate, well, a chainsaw on wheels comes to mind. The dual-sport genre stakes its claim somewhere in the middle ground—as neither a perfect dirt-bike or the best street bike, but fully capable of either.

If I wanted a street-legal but fairly hardcore dirt-bike, I'd look closely at machines like the newly-legalized KTM 450/525 EXC and Husqvarna TE 450/510 singles. Machines such as these tend to be true dirt-bikes that have been brought into street-legal compliance; they're OK for getting from Dirt A to Dirt B on paved connector routes, but are definitely better suited for off-road riding than they are for the street. Creature comfort was not their primary design focus, nor was highway travel. Look at the profile and padding of the seat and think about how it would feel after a half-hour or so of saddle-time.

A step closer to the street you'll find bikes like an 'old' but proven favorite—the Suzuki DRZ400, which originally evolved from a pure dirt-bike. A bit smaller in size are the Kawasaki KLX 250 and the Suzuki DR200SE, and Yamaha offers several models from the oddball TW200 (with fat tires that look like knobby doughnuts) to its XT250 and the new WR250R. Honda pipes in with the newly-released CRF230F. We are tuning our compromise with this sub-class

of dual-sports, as we sacrifice some off-road prowess for increased 'streetability'.

Continuing in that vein, if I wanted a bike that was biased more toward the street but still entirely dirt-worthy (within limitations), I'd look at the KTM 640 Adventure, the Honda XR650L, and the Suzuki DR650 on the dirtier side of the equation, and the Kawasaki KLR650 if I was feeling a bit more street-biased. Kawasaki has very recently



made substantial changes to its ancient but stone-axe reliable KLR, veering perhaps even closer to the street. Two of BMW's new trio of 650 singles should also fit in reasonably well here, those being the XChallenge and XCountry. This subcategory of bikes tends to be larger and heavier than those previously discussed, which can be an advantage in terms of comfort and probably street performance, but their size does take its toll off-road. Such machines can be, and often are, modified by their owners to enhance one or more aspect of their purpose and/or performance.

If what I really wanted was a street bike that was capable of a bit of modest off-road riding—on the dirty side of that continuum I'd look at bikes like the KTM 990 Adventure/S and BMW's uber-expensive HP2 Enduro (if I was wealthy), and as I got closer

to the pavement I'd progress through the BMW R1200 GS Adventure, the standard R1200 GS, the Aprilia Caponord, and the Buell Ulysses. Triumph's recently-retired off-road Tiger was a relatively weak entrant in this contest, in my opinion, and though my Ulysses should do just fine on terrain like a fire-road, I'd be more inclined to take my Caponord (the Buell does love to shred lumpy mountain asphalt, though). Moto Guzzi has announced the 1200 Stelvio, and BMW has recently introduced another promising new entrant, further blurring the delineations by slotting the parallel twin F800GS in between the larger opposed-twin 1200GS and the smaller single-cylinder 650's.

Once we get into the territory represented by this last group—called Adventurer Tourers by some—we tend to be talking larger, usually more expensive machines; equipment that the rider typically does not want to treat too harshly, or to drop. I've ridden my Caponord to the top of a rocky trail climbing a steep mountain in Montana (because I took a wrong turn off a fire-road and by the time I realized it there was no place to turn around), but that was an exception, as I much more often use it to navigate the rough pavement of twisty mountain backroads, or load up with hard luggage and a passenger and travel the byways at speed and in relative comfort. In case you're wondering, I don't intend to drop the Caponord—ever.

Suzuki's 1000 V-Strom, Ducati's Multistrada and the new Triumph Tiger would be pushing the dual-sport moniker, but in fairness they claim no off-road pretensions. Suzuki also offers its very popular 650 V-Strom and Kawasaki has introduced an interesting new machine—the Versys 650 twin—either of which might qualify as an adventure-tourer (or an adventure-sport?). There are other lesser-known or discontinued dual-sport options—the Suzuki DR350



High above Lake Jocassee on Horse pasture Road

was a favorite, and I recently acquired an old but nicely farkled (modified) '91 model. I haven't dropped it off-road yet, but give me time. If you like to window shop for stuff that you can't have, the Europeans have always had a larger roster of potential dual-sport dance partners than do we—lucky buggers. There are also those intrepid souls who simply take a dirt bike and convert it, though such machines often don't fare so well on the street, and licensing them can be a royal pain if not completely impossible.

To finish up, we'll discuss the emerging crop of so-called super-motards, which, with some definite exceptions, can often be described as tall street bikes having lots of suspension. In the past they have generally been mid-to-large displacement thumpers (singles), but there's an emerging trend toward larger, more-potent v-twins. They are to a greater or lesser extent styled like big dirt-bikes, and they 'should' be lighter in weight than more-typical street bikes, but the degree to which they accomplish that latter goal varies markedly. There are entire classes of racing involving the more extreme examples of these. But if you are not intent on the race track, bikes of this ilk are great for twisty back roads, especially if the pavement is breaking up. And, with the proper tires, some of these hooligans wouldn't blink an eye at dirt or gravel roads.

Suzuki's DRZ400 SM is a very good example of a super-motard. Unlike some

**Kawasaki KLR 650**  
Weight... 347  
HP... 44  
Cost New... \$6000  
3 years old... \$3000



**KTM Adventure 640/950**  
Weight... 347  
HP... 44  
Cost New... \$6000  
3 years old... \$3000



**BMW R1200 GS Adventure**  
Weight... 347  
HP... 44  
Cost New... \$6000  
3 years old... \$3000



**Aprilia Caponord**  
Weight... 474  
HP... 98  
Cost New... \$13,000  
3 years old... \$6000



**Buell Ulysses**  
Weight... 425  
HP... 103  
Cost New... \$11,495  
1 year old... \$9000



There are many wonders to be found off the beaten path.

Dual Sports are ideal for the road less traveled. It is a goal to investigate a new back road on every outing.

You'll find places and vistas "normal" folks will never see. And some stock machines are so quiet you'll be sneaking up on wild life of both fur and feather.

**Yamaha WR250R**

Weight... 276  
HP... NA  
Cost New... \$5899  
Introduced in 2008



**Kawasaki KLR250S**

Weight... 262  
HP... NA  
Cost New... \$4799  
Introduced in 2008



examples it does actually derive from an off-road bike and it provides a means of getting a foot in the moto-door without dropping excessive discretionary capital. Ducati offers its wicked desmo HyperMotard (I'm both fascinated by and fearful of desmodromic valve gear) and BMW offers its new 650 XMoto. Husqvarna has been a recent player and has a few delectable variants ranging from 450 to 610 cc's, Buell has its largish but cool XB12STT, and KTM has singles ranging from 450 to 690 (and then its mondo 950 Supermoto twin). And now for 2008 Yamaha has announced a WR 250X and Aprilia has unveiled the 750 Dorsoduro.

So, let's ask that question again—what do you intend to do with your new bike? Mostly street or mostly dirt? Single-person cow-trailing or two-up adventure touring? Nicely groomed fire roads or tight single-track mountain trails? Whatever your intent might be, I believe I sense a big grin right about now.



Robert Barnes on his KTM 950 Adventure on Pinnacle Mountain Road



65 year-old Ray Barnes on his Kawasaki KLR 650 on Green River Road

**Why I love Dual Sporting**

by Jack Bowers



Jack is always looking for new opportunities to get dirty... or stuck.

In the 40 years I have been riding motorcycles, I have ridden 3 different categories of bikes. My first ride was a used dirt bike and I have owned one pretty much ever since then. My second bike was a dual sport, called in that day an Enduro or dual purpose bike. The third type has been the sport touring type. All have given me much pleasure over the years.

About one and a half years ago, I got the urge to get back into dual sports. As passionate as I am about my other bikes, I love dual sporting the most. There is something about the freedom to go anywhere you point the front wheel, be it a small two lane blacktop, rugged jeep road, or legal motorized trail.

I often go to Google maps, or Map Quest and focus on an area around SC, NC or Georgia. I zero in until I find the smallest, most remote routes I can, then go ride. I have discovered many new places to ride. The great thing is, most times I'm no more than an hour and a half from Greenville.

A few months back, I had Norm Blore, the publisher, completely lost one afternoon. I preceded to show him that we were only a mile from Saluda, NC. He was dumbfounded! Norm returned the favor a month later when he pulled over to show me a great view and I didn't have a clue where we were.

Another appeal of dual sporting is the bikes. They are for the most part, simple, easy to work on; inexpensive to buy & operate; plus lightweight and agile to ride. Many a sport bike rider has been thoroughly humbled by someone on a dualie zipping up the local mountain roads. Most of the 650cc & under bikes will get 40 to 60 M.P.G. and the majority will willingly use regular 87 grade gasoline.

One drawback to a dual sport bike is the tall seat height. This is due to the long travel suspension with high ground clearance, both necessary when you go off road. Most all of these bikes have available, lowering links, shorter shocks and other tricks to get the seat height down. You can also have your seat lowered by modifying the foam and at the same time, customized for greater comfort. I have lowered the seat height on my present bike over 2 inches by installing new suspension links and a customized seat.

We dual sporters are one of the fastest growing segments of motorcycling. As their popularity grows, so does the aftermarket equipment support and organized ride events. Best of all we get exciting new models in many sizes to choose from.

If you see a guy on a bright orange KTM Adventure 640 wearing a bright, hi-vis yellow jacket, flag me down for a chat or a ride. I'm out there every chance I get.

**Suzuki DR650**

Most of these modifications will work just as well on a Kawasaki KLR 650, a KTM 640 Adventure or any standard dual sport bike. The fun is doing the set-up yourself and learning how each improvement makes your bike a better travel worthy companion.

This is the editor's personal bike. Purchased used in October of 2007 for \$3900. The bike looked new and ran clean but felt "plugged up". Before purchase, I googled DR650s and found tons of information. One must read a lot and have a general knowledge of his subject because you will soon find that not everyone on the web knows what they are talking about. After getting the general consensus that this bike has the basic goods for a foundation, I began choosing my "set-up" with proven aftermarket parts and accessories from recommendations originally read on the DR650 sites. I backed up this information with local discussions with other DR owners and local shops. The only irreversible modification is cutting open the top of the stock air box. I started with a small opening and went larger as I installed the jet kit, the pipe and the K&N filter. I tried different jet sizes and needle positions along the way and have landed on a happy zone I can live with. The actual parts and particulars are listed below. Lucky you. Savings of investigative time...priceless!



Here's the author in January off some tiny road near Rosman, NC. We live in such a fantastic area for year-round riding on the street and in the dirt. If you're reluctant to do a little exploring, you're missing a lot!

**Stock DR650 - 2006**

**Engine:** 644cc, four-stroke, single cylinder, SOHC, 4-valve, air/oil cooled  
**Carburetor:** Mikuni BST40  
**Ignition:** Digital/CDI  
**Starter:** Electric  
**Transmission:** 5-speed  
**Final Drive:** #525 chain  
**Seat Height:** 34.8 in. low seat setting 33.0 in.  
**Suspension Front:** Telescopic, leading axle, oil damped, 10.2 inches of travel

**Suspension Rear:** Link-type, fully adjustable spring preload, gas/oil damped, adjustable compression damping, 10.2 inches of travel  
**Brakes:** Front: Single hydraulic disc  
Rear: Single hydraulic disc  
**Tires:** Front: 90/90-21  
Rear: 120/90-17  
**Fuel Tank Capacity:** 3.4 gal.  
**Dry Weight:** 324 lbs.  
**MSRP:** \$4,999

**Seat**  
Stock. Needs to be upgraded for rides over 100 miles. Aftermarket enduro seats run about \$250 - \$350. They are broader and better supportive for your derriere. Try Corbin and Sargent.

**Air Box**  
K&N filter-\$48. Enlarging the top opening, free.

**Gas Tank**  
IMS 4.9 gallon. \$210 (stock tank was 3.4)

**Jet Kit**  
0000000 \$55.

**Handlebar Brush Guards**  
The handlebars are stock but I have Moose Racing bark busters with plastic brush guards - about \$80. They protect your levers from breaking in a fall and add great wind protection on those chilly days.

**Lighting Protection**  
A clear protective shield is a good idea.

**Fork Springs**  
I'm still using the stock springs and find them too spongy for fast riding on street and dirt. Eibach front fork springs are needed - \$100.

**Brakes**  
I have found the stock brakes to be adequate for most situations. Improvements can be had with a steel front line and an upgrade in pad material. Next would be a larger disc with a longer caliper bracket.

**Luggage Rack**  
Stock. Works well. Strong and convenient.

**Exhaust**  
FMF Q2 slip-on cannister adds a bit of hp, lightens weight considerably and sounds deeper but much louder than stock. \$350.

**Center Stand**  
The DR does not come with a center stand. It needs one. How else do you lube the chain, change tires, or work on it in a stable position? Aftermarket - \$160.

**Skid Plate**  
Moose. \$75.

**MotorcycleLifestyle Decal**  
Adds 30 hp and saves 25 pounds. Not really but the big empty side of the oversized tank did need a graphic treatment.

**Tires**  
Continental TKC80 front and rear. These work well on the pavement and in the dirt. About \$240 for a set.

**Luggage Mounts**  
Happy Trails side brackets were on the bike when I purchased it. They are very rugged and designed for hard cases to be mounted to them but they do double duty as pretty good crash guards (low speed or drops). \$400 with Givi side cases.

**Sprockets**  
FRONT: reduced from 15 to 14  
REAR: enlarged from 41 to 46. Greatly enhances acceleration to find that "happy zone" where it is immediately responsive. Both changes reduce top end but it will still pull 95 mph (in a controlled environment, of course).

**Shock Spring**  
Eibach shock springs \$130. I have not made this upgrade yet. I don't think I need it.

The single most important element that defines a dual sport's capabilities is its tires. The ability to ride wobble free down the pavement at 70 mph, then immediately take off up a dirt road or trail at a wheel spinning pace without too much drama is a difficult task for any tire maker. Dual sport tires are rated as "more street" or "more dirt" but each is a compromise. They're reasonably priced but they wear quickly when pushed hard. This example of a used TK80 rear has less than 2000 miles on it and could have gone a little further but dirt traction had become lacking.

Less than 2000 miles New