

GS / GSA

to the “small mountain” icon. What about when the going gets rough? Click to the “big mountain” icon.

If these settings are changed while at a stop the rider can actually feel the ground clearance of the bike change by nearly an inch as the suspension raises or lowers itself. While the system may be lacking the detailed adjustments the more refined dirt rider would be accustomed to (the computer now takes over your suspension adjustment), it is arguably the case that these bikes are simply not intended for *that* kind of riding—it’s a GS, not an HP2.

Given the nature of the suspension adjustments on the previous models (few clicks of preload up front requiring the adjustment tool and a few turns of the knob in back) the new system was quite welcome. Instead of pulling out the tool or stopping to turn a knob, the rider simply presses the button while in transit. Isn’t technology grand?

The first part of the morning ride was a relatively long stretch of highway that varied from straight to mildly twisty. Our leader for the day was not shy about keeping up the pace through the corners—neither was anyone else for that matter. The unusually wet weather throughout the Southwest over the past few months had left the hills in this area blanketed in a colorful tapestry of wildflowers. So there we were, some 15 or so like-minded riders winding through the kaleidoscopic hills with a chorus of Boxer engines serenading us the whole way. Thoughts of ESA, ABS, and whatever other acronyms I was sitting atop were simply absorbed and erased by the tapestry that nature had laid out for our group to ride through and absorb. To my thinking, that’s the sign of a well-designed system. If it improves the handling of the bike and you can forget it’s working, your focus is free to absorb the experience of the ride.

By mid-morning we crossed a bridge, took a right and left the pavement. This was the time to stop and deactivate the ABS (a procedure familiar to post-2002

GS owners). As the ESA system can be adjusted on the fly I opted to leave it in the same setting I had on the road at first to get some sort of baseline for comparison. This first stretch of road was so smooth and fast that it really didn’t require any adjustments to the suspension and changes were not overly apparent. The stock tires on the 1200 seemed more than adequate for the terrain as well with a good feel on the pavement and predictable response on the graded dirt roads.

After another stint of highway riding following lunch, a small contingent of riders opted to peel off for an impromptu photo session in an off highway vehicle area that was passed along the way. This is where I got my first taste of the GS Adventure model. Switching with another rider once we reached the dirt, I climbed aboard the big beast.

As a current 1150 GS Adventure owner, the initial impression of hopping on the 2008 Adventure model was, oddly enough, this thing is *big!* The older 1150 GSA is a big machine to be sure, but the new one has a bigger *look* to it from the

