

That badge.... at the right price



The BMW F650 Funduro

BMW have never really been known for utilitarian transport. High-end vehicles aimed at moneyed middle-to-upper management are their thing, but they broke the mould with the F650 Funduro. It's their equivalent of the Volkswagen Beetle, an entry-level bike for the masses and their first single cylinder bike since the Sixties.

In a further act of heresy it wasn't even built in Germany, nor did it use a BMW-built engine! A re-badged Rotax power unit provided the heart of the model, while the whole lot was screwed together under licence by the Italian Aprilia company. Even the name was very un-BMW-ish – 'Funduro' – which conjures up images of a fancy-dress off-road experience and isn't in the spirit of dour Teutonic behaviour at all.

But all these uncharacteristic goings-on are just as well really, since the F650 is more fun



than a beer festival. Despite its off-road styling the Funduro is much more suited to the tarmac, where it can cruise at 90mph all-day

or scratch through the bends with surprising agility.

At just 48bhp the engine isn't about to intimidate anyone, while the way it produces that power is free revving and exuberant. Three grand is needed on the dial for decent



progress and maximum power comes up at 6500rpm. Keep the 4-valve single spinning in this area and 100mph comes up with ease, topping out 10mph further on.

It's even a surprisingly capable tourer with a broad and comfortable seat that has Tardis-like properties; bigger, broader, flatter and more passenger-friendly than might first appear. A 200-mile tank range and a neat little fairing that deflects enough air for comfort just underscore the mileage capabilities.

The really unexpected attribute though is the Funduro's handling ability. Despite softly damped long-travel suspension the F650 remains composed in the corners and can be thrown about with abandon. It's just the thing for humiliating larger, more sportily biased bikes down undulating country back roads. The suspension will also cope with gentle off-road excursions, but the dual-purpose tyres aren't really up to proper mud-plugging.

Bikes like the F650 Funduro exist for several reasons: they're a fun alternative to larger, less manageable machines, or for single-cylinder fans. They're simple, but can cope with several different roles: gentle off-roader, tourer and back roads blaster all rolled into one. But, in the F650's case, it's also a relatively cheap way to buy into the BMW marque; your first step up the corporate ladder, if you like.