

## Motoring

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**David Williams** fixes up a Harley Davidson Fat Bob with high-performing specs for a smooth and entertaining ride to deepest Somerset

**W**HAT better way to say farewell to our long-term roadtest bike than a short 350-mile tour to deepest Somerset to put newly-fitted panniers, screen and rack to the test?

The parts brought Harley Davidson's £11,995 handsome Fat Bob – great for getting around town for meetings – up to a decent touring spec... at a price.

Two “distressed” leather panniers cost £574 plus £48 for brackets and £48 for optional locks. The clear perspex screen – good for deflecting the wind and rain on long rides – added £358 while the rack and “sissy bar” (useful for attaching luggage) added £435. So we ended up with a 1,584cc V-twin, six-speed, belt drive beauty for a total of £13,458, all fitted by experts at the friendly Warrs dealership on King's Road, labour costs £150.

The Fat Bob is a surprisingly agile, smooth and gutsy performer that enjoys bends, its nimbleness belying its slightly brutish, very chromed looks and the stonking 93lb of torque at 3,500rpm making the most of that imposing, fat, rear tyre.

It weighs in at 320kg but on the move is light and manoeuvrable, confidence boosted by the low seat of 663mm meaning that most riders can get both feet flat on the floor. Most of its miles have been in London traffic where – at first – HD's fabled foot-forward position seemed odd – but it swiftly gelled.

So how did it perform on “tour”?



**Gutsy:** the HD Fat Bob is a surprisingly agile and smooth performer

Superbly. The panniers looked a bit Wild West but they were practical and a perfect compromise between capacity and size. The two panniers and a small HD tote bag slipped over the sissy bar to swallow more than

enough for three days away including hiking gear, waterproofs, clothing and other essentials.

The screen was great at removing wind pressure on long open stretches, but significantly increased helmet buffeting over 65mph. Other-

wise, on motorways, A-roads and snaking, muddy back roads, the Fat Bob always felt sure-footed and achieved precisely 52mpg. It was eye-catching too, even attracting a crowd when parked up at Stonehenge, where I believe there are other attractions...

The rubber-mounted engine meant minimal vibration, but I enjoyed the reassuring vibes from the long-legged V-twin through the bars and well padded seat. A highly entertaining ride – I could have ridden all day and almost did.

### TOUGH JEANS GIVE PERFECT BALANCE

MOTORCYCLING trousers are a tricky choice. Leather or man-made fabrics can be hot and uncomfortable if you sit in a cafe or walk around, so it's tempting to wear jeans but they give little protection if you come off.

After viewing Draggin Jeans' video promoting their Kevlar-reinforced version and hearing Andrew Taylor – who runs the superb Urban Rider store at New Kings Road extol their virtues – it seemed a no-brainer, so I tested a pair.

As you can see at dragginjeans.net, the Australian makers are so confident in the toughness of their jeans that they perform dramatic

“drag tests”, towing riders along racetracks behind bikes on their backsides – wearing their jeans. Looks painful but they walk away smiling.

Close examination of the Next Gen pair (£199) reveals that vital parts – knees, backside, thighs – are protected by Kevlar fabric as used in military body armour and they are well made. Slightly thicker than traditional denim, you could wear them on the bike and at home, without



any downside; they look great and come in different styles, although it's best to choose them slightly long, to accommodate your riding position. On my tour they proved breathable, comfortable and stretchy.

Usefully, Andrew provides them with extra “sock”-style knee pads that fit underneath, for £15. They dug into my shins a little but give extra protection. Urban Rider is well worth a visit – it's at 51 New Kings Road, where the old Bullet store used to be. More at urbanrider.co.uk

### HOW NOT TO GET LOST

THERE'S one thing I dread on bike tours – getting lost. It means parking, taking your gloves off and rummaging around for a map unless you strapped one to the tank.

So I tried TomTom's Rider Pro UK (inset), a compact, waterproof £250 device that comes with a helmet headset. It was a Godsend. Directions were clear and audible and the battery lasted a healthy four to five hours.

It has its own bracket and wires and its touch-screen controls work well. It even warns of speed camera locations,

and boots up quickly. As many riders don't want to wire a sat nav to their bike I tried Arkon's clip-on waterproof GPS case, £24.98 from Bikebits. It



worked well thanks to its easily-fitted handlebar clamp. You can operate the screen through the plastic “window” although the TomTom's projecting “hood” made this slightly awkward. It remained firmly in place at speed, takes seconds to unscrew when you park and, although protected by my bike's screen, did prove waterproof. More at buybits.com

## FERRARI APPRENTICES GIVEN CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

WHO better to launch Ferrari's new apprentice training facility than Kryten – aka Robert Llewellyn – the science-loving mechanoid from Red Dwarf?

The actor, who presents Scrapheap Challenge, helped open the luxury firm's new apprentice facility in Slough and met the 11 apprentices enrolled in a three-year programme.

“Meeting the apprentices was inspirational,” says Llewellyn. “They

are clearly an exceptional group of young people who have been given the opportunity many would only dream of. Teaching young people the skills in science, engineering and technology they will learn on this apprentice programme is vital to our future.”

Competition for the 11 places was fierce, with more than 1,000 applications from school leavers. The “winners” will be employed at UK

Ferrari dealerships and attend 24 weeks of dedicated Ferrari training at Ferrari North Europe's head office too.

“We are delighted to welcome the new apprentices and were overwhelmed by the interest in this programme,” says Matteo Torre, regional manager Ferrari North Europe.

“This project is part of the Ferrari philosophy of investing in young talent.”

Ferrari's investment in the apprenticeship totals more than £500,000 and includes two purpose-designed classrooms with 11 computer terminals, a dedicated fully-equipped workshop and, of course, a number of cars too.

One apprentice was taken on by Joe Macari Servicing at Wandsworth, one by HR Owen Sports Cars London and one by Maranello Egham, among others.

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**Golden opportunity:** apprentices will learn vital engineering skills