

SUZUKI GSX 400 SSN

In 1997 I bought a silver Suzuki GSX 400 SSN. It came from Performance Salvage in Darwen Lancashire.

It cost £1500 with the original Japanese log book and 12500km's on the clock. It was not UK registered as I had negotiated a £250 reduction to buy as seen. We hadn't even heard it run. The battery was beyond flat. The machine was loaded into a van for the shortish trip to Manchester.

It didn't take long to get another battery fitted and fresh petrol fed through the carbs. Almost straight away it fired up and revved smoothly. It was then run with Redex in the tank for 6 months.

The 400 was chosen because I'm 6'1" and the wife is 5'3" and we could both ride it comfortably. Up to this point I was dispatching a 650 katana and the wife rode her GSX 250ez to work at night. So the 400 would be and was in use every day.

It was easy enough to register for UK plates. First it was MOT'd using the frame number then insurance cover note was issued with the frame number on it. Both these were handed into the local DVLA office with a cheque for £65 as well as a form from DVLA. 3 days later the paper work was returned with a tax disc that had a new age related registration number on it. **The next day a top box was bungeed on to the rear part of the seat and it started to earn it's keep.**

Fast forward to 2008 and we've still got her (notice the familiar term now used,) only now the clocks read 104000km's.

No major work has been needed indeed the only faults have been common and minor.

The most obvious defect is the most common, the original 4-2 exhaust. The down pipes are mild steel and the silencers stainless though coated black. The Mild steel rots and needs reasonably constant

repainting to keep it in check. For this I bought a non runner 400 that had a Yoshimura 4-1 stainless exhaust fitted. I went to Brighton to collect it. After swapping the exhausts I got it running and sold it on. (The new owner still has it and yes are still friends.) Another alternative would be the system from the 1992-4 400 impulse which is a stainless 4-1 system.

Other faults have been the chain guide /guard. The front section weld broke which produced a strange noise that took a while to diagnose. To repair, it was unbolted, rewelded and refitted in minutes.

The lug that the gear lever pivots on broke it's weld again minutes to get rewelded. The coolant warning light (no gauge) stuck on. It was traced to a stuck sensor by the thermostat housing. A spare is waiting to go on. The rear shock absorbers needed attention after a couple of years, so were sent away to UK suspension in Bradford where they were rebuilt and the springs powder coated for £160, fitted with heavier oil and have been fine ever since, about 8 years.

Only normal servicing has been required and the engine is original. The oil has been changed at 6000miles 10.000km's this is when the air filter is changed. I use a GS 500 one with a fluted top part from the Katana owners club inserted. This is a part specifically made for the 400 by the club.

Tyres are Bridgestone BT45 front and rear. Indeed if you wish to retain correct fitment these are the only ones available in the UK. Brakes are FA 158 front and FA 63 rear as per GSXR's.

The brakes are my only gripe, They are very good and very effective but there are no rubber boots over the brake pistons, as per modern bikes. This means every time the pads need changing at the magic 10.000



km's the brakes need stripping for cleaning. As per modern bikes.

The valves have been checked only twice up to yet with no major adjustment needed.

The finish isn't a major concern personally and the frame paint is quite thin as per modern bikes but Smooth rite silver is a really good match and has lasted well.

The battery as all sealed for life batteries needs to be on an Optimate when not in use for more than 2 months. I would recommend if you've a 250/400 and are not using it for a month or so Drain the carburetors, as unleaded fuel turns to varnish in 6 weeks or so and the jets on these machines are quite small, blocking quickly.

The riding position is not as per the original Kat of the 80's but more neutral, the physical size of the 400 is big for a 400 but smaller than a 600 and I'm happy to cover 300+ miles a day.

Performance is about handling, and it does. With the speed limiter still fitted at 180 km/h (112mp/h) it doesn't really matter in today's traffic. Anyway with the quick revving engine you get away from everything anyway.

The fact we've still got her after 11 years, and every time I ride her any thoughts of selling disappear as



quickly as the cars in the mirrors, tells the story really.

Cheers

Fossie.