



# 2015 Suzuki DR650

Some members might know Suzie as something of an ace at LDTs on her Scorpa TY125. But she's also a long distance adventure travel rider and for that she's found Suzuki's DR650 to be unbeatable

Words & pics: JB

**Name:** Suzie Prevett

**TRF Group:** South Wales & others

**How long owned:** Several(!) since 2015

**Dream bike:** You're looking at it!

The DR650 goes back a long way, to about 1990, when the DR650RS first turned up in Europe, only to be superseded by various DR Big's. But in 1996 a light, basic trail version, the DR650SE, was created, and it's been rolling off Suzuki production lines, practically unchanged, ever since. Banished from

Europe in 2001 on eco grounds, it's continued to sell well elsewhere, making fun headlines like being New Zealand's top selling bike of 2023 (really!), while in the US its \$6999 price tag makes trail and adventure riding attainable for all budgets.

The DR formula is very simple. A 644cc air-oil cooled SOHC four-valve single cylinder four-stroke. Basic CDI ignition, 40mm Mikuni carb (no fuel pump), five speed gearbox, cable operated wet multiplate clutch. All very handily packaged in a steel semi-cradle frame and significantly with 260mm of suspension travel front and



rear, plus 21/17in wheels. Weight is a manageable 147kg (dry) and power is a claimed 44hp (real world 35hp) but power isn't an issue, whereas the screw and locknut valve adjustment is – such simplicities make for easy maintenance on the go. And while the suspension is basic, it's full-length and easily upgraded. Found in dealerships in all four corners of the world, the DR is easy to maintain, easy to find spares for, shockingly reliable and thus an ideal long distance adventure bike.

This one, a 2015 vintage, belongs to Suzie Prevett, one of several she and husband Kelvin have acquired over the years. They're just back from completing the ACT Portugal and this year will be riding the France and Pyrenees ACTs (that's Adventure Country Tracks). But two previous DRs took Suzie and Kelvin across South America on a two-and-a-half-year journey starting in 2017.

"It was probably back in 2015, I think, when we got our first DRs and we did a bit of a test ride from the UK over to Italy. We were thinking about riding around South America on bikes and Kelvin said that he would ride whatever bike I rode – it makes sense for spares, tools and such, so I had the choice – but he didn't want anything too small! The DR650 seemed to fit the bill.

"The moderate (seat) height was its biggest asset and it claimed it could do everything. It would go alright on the longer distances and on tarmac but if we wanted



go off-road it could handle that too. We wanted to not have to turn around if we got to dirt roads and things like that.

"I find the DR does sort of do everything yet does nothing particularly amazing. It's comfortable, I can get my feet on the floor and it rides at a relaxed pace. It likes to chug right along at 60-ish, which means if I'm taking a ride to, say, Oxford for the Overland Event, then I'll take the A roads, not the motorway, but that's just

## TRF BIKES: SUZUKI DR650

fine with me, much nicer in fact.”

As you can see from the pics – and this is the case with nearly all DR650s – Suzie’s is no longer standard. Fine-tuned for adventure travel, there are a fair number of modifications.

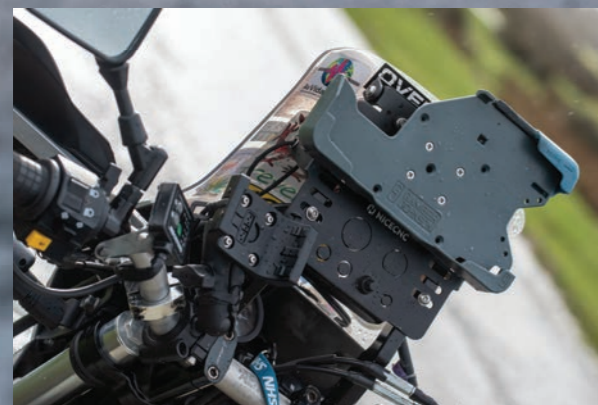
“I guess there were three big things that made a huge difference. Changing the foot pegs to a wider more grippy type. The 26-litre Acerbis fuel tank. And we changed the carburettor (a regular upgrade is the Mikuni TM 40 flat slide ‘pumper’ carb), which was most useful riding at high altitude in Peru – our friends on standard DR650s found theirs struggled a bit, but they still made it.

Obviously there are the other mods, too, like the lowered seat, the luggage, crash protection and navigation, and Kelvin tinkered quite a lot with these various things, but to me those were the three main changes I would make again.”

It’s an amazing story, the DR650, some 35 years old and still going strong, as are many of the earliest examples, right through to Suzie’s 10-year-old one here. To be found on every continent exploring. Just a shame we don’t see them available in dealerships here in Europe... ■



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