

## BMW R18 B Ride and Review

by Alan Henderson 10-9-2021

While at the Barber Motor Sports Vintage Festival, I had the opportunity to demo the BMW R 18 B (Bagger). First a disclaimer, I have ridden BMW GS Adventures since 2006 and have many miles on them. That is only to point out that I am very biased.

I first saw the original R18 in 2019 at the BMW Motorrad Days in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. We watched a stunt rider ring this monster out, smokey doughnuts, burn-outs and wheelies. What a show and impression it made. Now, 2 years later, it was my turn, but do not expect me to impress anybody with my riding skills. From a distance this bike is a looker, up close and from the riders seat it is really impressive.



But for me it was also a little intimidating. It has a low seat height of 28 inches and the best way to get this 877# beast up is to turn the handlebars to the right and it comes up with ease, thanks Tommy for the tip. This bike has 116 lb feet of torque and 91 HP, and when I hit the starter and it fired up, that torque made the bike twist. A quick twist on the throttle will almost yank it from your hands. My GS does that, but not like this! This bike has analog gauges that includes one called reserve power. For me that reserve power gauge stayed around 75% most of the time. This modern bike has a 10.25" TFT screen that gives lots of info and doubles as the GPS. The tank holds 6.3 gallons and I noticed that the avg MPG was at 48, so 250 + miles would be a good range estimate for this bagger. This bike has a heal toe shifter, that I hate, and it did not have clutch-less speed shifting, like on my Adventure. Even though the running boards are not huge they are more than large enough. Because the "jugs" are so large there are no highway pegs to stretch out on, but I am sure that in the future there will be aftermarket. There is a nice

telephone compartment on top of the tank that offers wireless charging as well as BMW's version of Apple Car Play. Even though I did not "play" with the radio it did have a head unit with 4 speakers designed by Marshall. The bags are large and had the electric locking feature. As expected it does have cruise, and on this bike it is adaptive, nice. (No, I did not test it). This bike has self-leveling suspension and linked brakes as well as 3 drive modes, Rock, Roll, and Rain. And to help with that 877#, it even has Reverse and Hill Start Assist. The LED lights with an adaptive headlight help in nighttime riding. There were 5 other demo riders, and I was last, only followed by the corporate sweep. The bike needed almost no throttle to pull out and up the small hill to the main road. The ride lasted about an hour and we took some very nice back roads that did include a few twisties. Not long into the ride we came to a 4 way stop where the road was canted. OH NO!! As the #2 rider came to a stop, due to the unlevel surface, he lost it. RIDER DOWN. We lost about 15 minutes as the corporate dudes checked him and the bike out. Several of our group directed traffic and picked the bike up. The sweep escorted the scratched-up bike and rider back to home base. That left me to be the sweep for the rest of the ride. We rode for 10-15 miles of good curvy roads and turned around in a parking lot that gave us a chance to test slow speed driving characteristics and they were very good for something this large. Now back to home base. On the ride I was impressed with the power of this bike. It was not fast but that tractor like torque was there at all speeds. However, that power also sent vibrations to the floorboards and hand grips. Like I told the BMW dude, the bike does not need a tach, because at 3500 RPM the bike is telling you to shift. The bike also had to be made to lean and it really liked to follow the cracks in the road. Handling was good, you just had to get used to it, and by the end of the ride I was. It was just not like my Adventure. The Ergos were spot on and it was very, very comfortable. The seat was GREAT and there was a lot of room, nice. My Adventure has a monster tank that limits my knee placement, so I really enjoyed being able to have more leg movement and space. As I rode, I could not help but to compare it to my Adventure bike. That is not fair to either bike because they are so different and designed for a different role and different people. This bike is made for the open, cross-country road, ridden by a laidback rider looking for max comfort. I do not believe this bike competes with a Harley but is designed for someone that wants something different than the traditional V-twin. Someone that wants to be noticed on a retro VERY cool but modern bike. This was a very nice bike and thanks to BMW for letting me ride it.