Teaching the skills to keep you moving

For some time now the ‘adventure sport’ motorcycle segment has been growing considerably, with the BMW GS range of machines making up the lion’s share of new sales. Indeed, a whole breed of riders are discovering the joy of planning a long-distance overland ride to experience new faces, different cultures and the freedom that comes from just being on the road.

Because all the models in BMW Motorrad’s comprehensive Enduro line-up have the capability to take you off the beaten track and to areas where other motorcycles just can’t reach, it is important for riders to have the confidence, ability and ‘know-how’ to keep their bikes running and to be able to perform ‘on the spot’ repairs if necessary.

With seven Dakar Rallies, a Trans Oriental Rally and numerous national enduro events behind him, World of BMW UK’s Off-Road Skills Chief Instructor Simon Pavey understands just how important it is to have the skills to maintain your own bike when travelling or racing. Furthermore, the seasoned rally veteran has taught off-road riding skills to literally hundreds of riders at the World of BMW school in South Wales, many of whom are planning exciting and ambitious trips but lacking the confidence and understanding to prepare and look after their own machines. This is where the new BMW Off-Road Skills Adventure Maintenance course comes in, as Simon explains.

“It’s an idea that I had quite a while ago, but it has become increasingly important as more and more riders discover the benefits of BMW ownership,” he says. “Twenty years ago if you were planning on doing some long-distance touring, you had to have the knowledge and skills to be able to fix your own motorcycle, because it was taken for granted that something would go wrong while you were out on the road. Now the machines are so reliable – after all, they only need servicing every 10,000 kilometres, so you don’t expect anything to go wrong – but of course, when you go travelling things can and do happen, and usually at the most inconvenient time and place!”

The new Off-Road Skills Adventure Maintenance course is designed for riders to learn the basic skills and knowledge that will allow them to maintain their own bikes when travelling. With years of travel and racing experience between them, Simon Pavey and his team of instructors are teaching participants the skills to understand what is and isn’t repairable on the road, as well as

showing which tools and parts are practical and essential to carry.

The courses consist of a combination of lessons and ‘hands on’ practical sessions covering such topics as checking oil and fluid levels; repairing oil and fuel leaks; dealing with water crossings, and the results if it goes wrong; replacing brake pads and components; fixing punctures; jump-starting; preparation and common preventative tips needed for travelling; bike set-up, including controls and suspension; emergency refuelling; pre-ride safety checks and a pre-travel service.

The BMW school is also providing all the bikes, tools and spare parts for participants to practice on, so they don't have to worry about scratching their own wheel rims while learning to change tyres! According to Simon, any motorcyclist could benefit from this type of course and he believes that equipping yourself with additional knowledge about how your machine works will not only make you a more confident rider, but it will also allow you to enjoy your trip more, safe in the knowledge that you have the skills to deal with a variety of situations.

“The feedback from the first two courses has been excellent – what we’re not trying to do is create BMW mechanics, but just to give riders enough basic skills to get them out of trouble in the field. The course isn’t a replacement for a normal bike service routine or essential repairs either; however, many of the customers who come to our school for off-road skills tuition know nothing about their machines and we want to teach them that with a little understanding, you can quite literally go a long way!

“We’re using a variety of machines from the BMW range to cover all sorts of components, such as dry/wet sumps, shaft and chain drives, and air- and water-cooling systems. We also use a variety of pre-broken parts such as engine casings, tyres with holes in them, worn wheel bearings, brakes etc. We teach people the reasons why things happen, how to recognise potential safety issues and how to put things right.”

The Off-Road Skills Adventure Maintenance courses are a welcome expansion to the riding programme offered by the World of BMW school in the UK and cost just £195. For more information, riders outside of the UK should visit the www.worldofbmw.com website, call +44 208 607 3917 or email
bmw@worldofbmw.com
for more details.