

CLASSIC DRIVER

Ridden: Ducati Diavel



Last year Ducati launched its magnificent Multistrada all-rounder but, being a 155mph trail bike that could easily dispense with continents two-up and harry race-replicas at trackdays, it wasn't an easy machine to categorise.

This year Ducati has confused us all again with the new Diavel. If the Diavel (Bolognese dialect for 'Devil') must be pigeonholed, then think of it as a cruiser/drag-racer/sportsbike/roadster. However, after a fortnight with a top-spec Carbon Red model, it's probably easier to say what it isn't; it's not really a tourer, at least not if you intend taking a pillion over any distance. But let's first take a look at what it is.

Cruiser? Oh yes – the raked Marzocchi forks, the pulled-back bars, the swoopy tank and bodywork and the low, scooped-out seat all lend it serious US-style cruiser credentials. And, trust me on this, the Diavel looks a whole lot more impressive in the metal than it does in any photo.



Drag-racer? You be the judge. In a recent independent test by MCN, the Diavel accelerated from zero to 60mph in 3.1sec (Ducati claims 2.6), to 100mph in 6.0sec and to 120mph in just under 8.7sec. That's Bugatti Veyron fast, although it's perhaps worth noting here that a set of four tyres for a Veyron costs over £10,500 more than a Standard-spec Diavel. Of course, on a public road this sort of performance is academic but, having had brief access to a private test track, I can wholeheartedly confirm that acceleration is nothing short of truly explosive.

This performance comes courtesy of the 1198cc desmodromic V-twin as found in other current big-capacity Ducatis, in this case tuned for 160bhp with 94lb ft of torque. Couple this with a less wheelie-prone long-wheelbase chassis, relatively low weight (207kg dry is pretty trim for a bike with the Diavel's dimensions) and a huge, 240-section rear tyre and it's little surprise that in a straight line the Diavel is king.







Sportsbike? Well, it certainly stops like a sportsbike. Those beefy Brembos (with ABS) coupled with a sticky Pirelli, bite hard, very hard. Though not personally attempted, top speed is in the region of 155mph, while at a racetrack an average rider on a fast sportsbike would be humiliated by a good rider on a Diavel. At speed the Diavel is rock-solid stable, but it steers with alacrity. Unlike most cruisers there's ample ground clearance in corners for knee-down jockeys, but changing direction at lower speeds does require a bit of a tug on the bars.







Roadster? In so far as it's an unfaired bike with an undemanding riding position, then yes. Importantly, the Diavel is happy to potter about in city traffic, and riding is further assisted by a sweet gearchange, a light-action 'slipper' clutch and three selectable riding modes: Urban - power restricted to 100bhp with soft power delivery and max traction control, Touring - full 160bhp with soft power delivery and medium traction control, or Sport - full power and max throttle response with minimum traction control.







Almost needless to say, the Diavel sounds like a proper motorbike should. The blood-curdling bark from the twin exhausts is nothing short of uproarious; how Ducati managed to slip it past the official decibel meter I don't know.

Tourer? Well, yes and no. The Diavel's relaxed gait at motorway speeds is certainly conducive to touring, as is the comfy riding position with sensibly rearward footrests. With around 43mpg, the 17-litre fuel tank should give a safe range of some 130 miles or so – less than a proper tourer, but not too bad – and if you invest in a few accessories, namely the tank bag, rear bag and Touring windscreen, then a run to the Côte d'Azur or wherever could be on the cards. However, trips with a pillion passenger are best kept short as the extending rear grab rail is a triumph of form over function, as are the fold-out pillion footrests, the offside one being located too close to the upper exhaust muffler when in use.



So, the Diavel looks ultra-cool, it'll beat pretty much anything away from the lights, it can stop on a sixpence, handle twisty roads with aplomb and, suitably accessorised, it'll take you around Europe without breaking into a sweat. Moreover, it has real presence, character and soul. Pigeonholing be damned, this is one fantastic motorbike.

Prices in the UK: £12,995 Standard, £15,495 Carbon Black, £15,895 Carbon Red (+ £129 OTR charges).

Text: [Tom Stewart](#)

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