

MOTO GUZZI V-TWINS

If you've high mileage on your agenda there's one group of classics you need to look at. Moto Guzzi's long-legged V-twins can rack up the distance, and cover it at speed...

MOTO GUZZI'S V-twins occupy a different world. You'll struggle to find one of its tourers with less than 40,000 miles on its clocks, while many have well into six figures. You'll also find they're often only for sale because the seller has taken a fancy to another Guzzi spotted in one of the best owners' mags out there, *Gambalunga*.

Every non-Guzziphile seems to think that the engine came from a three-wheeler designed for the military and adopted by farmers. Although not strictly true, what's wrong with an engine designed to run forever and be easily fixed if it does break down?

What is true is that these twins can trace their genesis to 1967's V7, which evolved into the ultimate sporting Guzzi, the V7 Sport of 1971. From then on the bikes were up for anything, from beating long-haul Harleys at their own game, through to winning races against Japanese superbikes. Forty years on you still see them everywhere, from oily-rag T3s on winter rallies, through commuter-scooter Californias, to as-new Le Mans on the Motogiro.

On the road you discover why. Despite appearances, Guzzi's twins are surprisingly wieldy and even the racy Le Mans is all-day comfy. Instant shove is available from nowhere, right up until you fancy a change of gear. Which is fortunate, because the shaft drive means careful gear selection is needed, and best avoided in corners.

But if the gearbox doesn't like corners the rest of the bike loves them. Fab stability is a given for Italian bikes of this era, but steering is much quicker than, say, a Ducati. Their linked brakes are a bit Marmite, but the whole Guzzi thing seems to be something you grow into. Lots of owners hated their first ride on a Guzzi, but years later they've still got one and are totally besotted.

Sadly the company lost its way in the early eighties. Nonsense like 16-inch front wheels not only makes handling odd, it also makes getting tyres difficult. Luckily, a decade later the factory found its way back, not only via the obvious California life-line, but also with new bikes as varied as 1991's Daytona and the 1996 Centauro.

Guzzi has plenty of history but it wears it lightly. Originality troubles owners less than other marques, who happily tweak their bikes to suit their needs. Just ensure you get the original bits from their attic.

Which you buy depends on what you want. Something sporty for the weekend makes a MkI Le Mans obvious, but for less than half the price a 1988 MkV offers much the same experience without the risk of getting a fake.

The chilled California has been the mainstay of the range forever so money goes from next to nothing to today's list price, but the 1975-on original can be had for less than a recent wannabe – just make sure you get the original panniers, spoked wheels and screen.

The no-brainer all-rounder is the naked T3, although the faired Spada, introduced in 1978, is cheaper still. Or for a left field option there's the automatic Convert which does away with the clunky gearbox. Spares are generally off-the-shelf, although the earlier round heads and barrels are all but gone, as are the linked brakes and auto 'box.

Why they remain largely overlooked is something of a mystery. In the seventies many testers preferred Guzzi's offerings to Ducati's, but history does strange things and while Ducati's racing success reminds us weekly of their heritage, with Moto Guzzi you have to dig a little. But then that's also true of truffles, another acquired but highly prized taste.

LOOK FOR

- **Slipping clutch** – ask the seller, but it's easy to lie. Not a difficult job, but an engine-out one.
- **Universal joint** – £100+ in parts alone. Vibration through the right footpeg on the overrun is the giveaway.
- **Leaking crankcase or gearbox seal** – giveaway is oil dripping off the bell housing. Another engine-out session.

INTERESTED? ALSO LOOK AT...

DUCATI BEVEL TWINS, BMW FLAT TWINS

FACTS

MOTO GUZZI V7 SPORT

WHAT TO PAY
 £9500 (Needs work)
 £12,500 (MoT'd & taxed)
 £15,000 (Mint)

SPECIFICATION
 ENGINE 748cc
 ohv V-twin
 POWER 70bhp
 WEIGHT 454lbs (206kg)
 CRUISING SPEED 95mph

MAINTENANCE
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 EASY LIFE SHED LIFE

PARTS & SUPPORT
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 AS MUCH HEN'S TEETH

RIDING CHALLENGE
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 INSTINCTIVE ALIEN

MOTO GUZZI MK1 LE MANS

WHAT TO PAY
 £8500 (Needs work)
 £11,500 (MoT'd & taxed)
 £16,000 (Mint)

SPECIFICATION
 ENGINE 844cc
 ohv V-twin
 POWER 80bhp
 WEIGHT 463lbs (210kg)
 CRUISING SPEED 95mph

MAINTENANCE
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 EASY LIFE SHED LIFE

PARTS & SUPPORT
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 AS MUCH HEN'S TEETH

RIDING CHALLENGE
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 INSTINCTIVE ALIEN

MOTO GUZZI T3 CALIFORNIA

WHAT TO PAY
 £4000 (Needs work)
 £5500 (MoT'd & taxed)
 £7500 (Mint)

SPECIFICATION
 ENGINE 844cc
 ohv V-twin
 POWER 68bhp
 WEIGHT 495lb (225kg)
 CRUISING SPEED 75mph

MAINTENANCE
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 EASY LIFE SHED LIFE

PARTS & SUPPORT
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 AS MUCH HEN'S TEETH

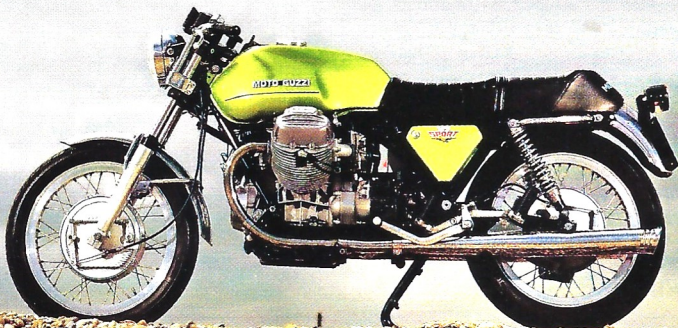
RIDING CHALLENGE
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 INSTINCTIVE ALIEN



The Mk1 Le Mans is among the most desirable of all



1971 V7 Sport is
the ultimate
sporting Guzzi



T3 roadster is an
affordable all-
rounder

