

SAY HELLO TO THE TWINS!

2014 Moto Guzzi California 1400

STORY: GARY KOZ MRAZ PHOTOS: RON SINOY

Californians love big twins; in fact we spend an enormous amount of money making big twins bigger. Not satisfied with the original size of jugs, we want 'em pumped up, and we're not the only ones obsessed with the twins. The British have been expanding their Parallel-Twins for decades and the Italian's have taken the twins to whole new level. The sexy Motto Guzzi California is no exception, sporting a massive set of twin's 90 degree transverse. However they hang - Vertical, Parallel or Transverse - big bodacious air cooled twins always capture Californians' attention.



Over forty years ago Motto Guzzi introduced the California and this 8th generation motorcycle continues to play a leading role in the collective imagination of motorcyclists all over the world. First introduced back in 1971 this machine's powerful personality was based on the tried and tested frame of the V7 Special and its legendary 90° 757cc V twin engine. This frame/engine combination proved such a tremendous international success that it was eagerly adopted by the Los Angeles Police Department and later by police departments in other states. The rest is history and the California's wheels have never stopped turning, neither has its development. Year after year, the bike's styling and technology have been updated without altering its original character and spirit. Growing up in California I've always loved the intimidating Guzzi cop bike look. For a company that's been continually manufacturing motorcycles since 1921 we don't see a Moto Guzzi California on our freeways often, but when we do, we stand in admiration.



This ultimate evolution of the Guzzi 90-degree V-Twin was developed at Aprilia in Noale, where Piaggio's R&D department is now located. Its cam-in-head, eight-valve, rubber-mounted engine has been bumped to 1380cc by enlarging the 1200's bore from 95 to 104mm and retaining the 81.2mm stroke. Twin-spark ignition (two plugs per head) ensures a clean burn in those huge cylinders. Moto Guzzi claims 96 horsepower and 88.5 foot-pounds of peak torque.

Modern electronics are key: The MGCT, as Guzzi calls its traction control system has three riding modes: Veloce (Sport), Turismo (Touring), and Pioggia (Rain). After firing the California 1400 Custom up, press the red starter button to the right and hold it down for a second, then release. The engine mode display in the speedo gauge will have a bar around it, and then tap the starter to cycle through the engine maps. Once it is illuminated on the display, hold the Mode button down a sec then you're able to adjust the traction control settings. It is during hard launches and hard braking that the effectiveness of the traction control is most evident. Off the line, it keeps the back wheel from spinning out so the motorcycle just hooks up and goes. During hard braking, it keeps the bike upright, in line and steady. The 2014 is the first year with throttle-by-wire fuel injection with a

The 2014 California 1400 is truly a work of art. Designed by Miguel Galluzzi, designer of the original Ducati Monster, he is now head of the Piaggio Group Advanced Design center in Pasadena. Visually pleasing from its unique headlamp cluster with RDL and LED daytime lighting to the flush mount LED taillights this California seems dedicated to modern riders who love the classic Guzzi styling. Supplementary fog lights controlled from the right hand switch block, windshield with stainless steel trim, shiny chrome

handlebars and two-tone seat. Style wise Motto Guzzi had paid close attention to details. From the metal badging to the chrome protection rails of the hard bags, this motorcycle is aesthetically balanced and beautiful from any angle.

The bigger 1380cc air cooled twins (up from 1064) are muscular and torquey. This big twin springs to life with a jerk to the left and settles into a wonderful vibration reminiscent of Guzzi's American cousin Harley-Davidson. Once at speed this transverse twin run smooth as silk.



52mm throttle body.

An all-new double-cradle, steel frame mounts a 46mm Sachs fork that is raked to 32 degrees, while pair of Sachs shocks control the rear. Radial tires, 130/70-18 front and 200/60-16 rear, are fitted to the California, which has an impressive 66.3-in. wheelbase. ABS-equipped Brembo brakes feature radial-mount four-piston calipers with 320mm discs in front and a two-piston rear with a 282mm disc. Every review of this bike touts its impressive braking ability and I concur.

My glossy black with chalk-white pinstripes touring edition is fitted with an optional trunk. It removes easily with three bolts and for this story, we removed it because the bike looks so damn good without it on. I like the buck horn handle bars and two-tone seat is comfortable for both rider and passenger. The seat sits at 29.1 inches and an optional 28.3 inch seat is available. The 9.2-gallon hard bags (35 Liters) flip open forward allowing easy access and the trunk fits a full face helmet. The Highway Patrol windshield, LED headlights, ABS, Cruise control, chrome protection rails all standard.

The 5.4 gallon gas tank seems sufficient and Moto Guzzi claims mpg in the low 40s but even under moderate riding conditions I would guess an average of mid 30s. From a touring perspective that means more frequent gas stops than most other "Touring Class" motorcycles.

This bike feels good. The jugs jutting out at tank level demand that floorboard are less forward and this makes for a less stretched out, more neutral seating position. At 6'1" I did not feel cramped, although I would put on a set of highway pegs and crash bars for the long hauls. This bike has very aggressive lean angles and its low center of gravity inspire rider to toss the California around

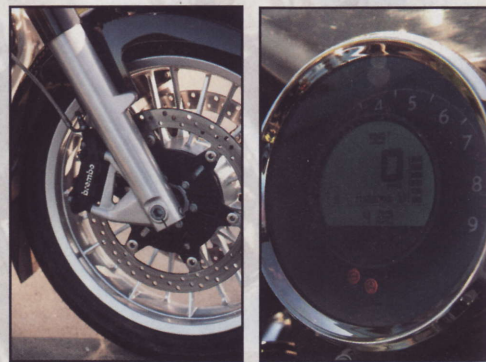


the twisties confidently. The floorboards have plastic scrapers that are easily replaceable, plus they don't make that nasty metal on concrete sound on contact.

The 6 speed transmission is graceful and void of all the low gear clunk common among many cruisers. Moto Guzzi employs a Shaft Drive, more specifically a Cardan shaft (is any shaft used to transmit power which has one or more universal joints in it). What this does is separate the forces of the power train from the swing arm itself. The swing arm on the right hand side is a large diameter hollow tube with no joints or pivots, so it's very rigid and ideal for handling integrity. The drive shaft, which has two universal joints, is carried inside it, but it's free to float and has no direct affect on the swing arm. The end result is behavior which is effectively the same as a chain drive bike. The familiar pros and con's remain

the same: more unsprung mass so the suspension movement is more sluggish, but maintenance is low and it stays cleaner. Otherwise, you'd hardly tell the difference between the shaft and chain.

All the new technology and design are part of a much bigger plan by the Piaggio Group, which bought Moto Guzzi and its Mandello del Lario factory, in Como, Italy in 2004. Since then has injected more than \$54 million to bring the Moto Guzzi brand and its motorcycles back to the global market. It's not a bike for everyone, especially since only 265 2014 California's 1400s were slated to Moto Guzzi dealers in America. The cruiser market is crowded at this price point but if you are one of the lucky owners, you *will* stand out in



the crowd. I believe that the California is just the beginning of a series of new bikes and Americans will be saying hello to the Italian twins again soon. **BASE PRICE: \$18,490**

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