

BIKE TEST

Hyosung GT650S

- Svelte 650
- LAMS legal
- \$8999+orc





CUT

At last there's a bargain

PRICE

mid-sized learner bike

CLOUT

that can grow with you.

Words by JEREMY BOWDLER, photography by LOU MARTIN

“Wow. That looks great.” That’s always the first comment you get. “What is it?” That’s always the second.

“Hyosung? Never heard of it.” You will, my friend, you will.

Hyosung, a Korean company, has taken a leaf from Ducati’s book to produce a motorcycle specifically to comply with the NSW, ACT and Tasmanian LAMs (Learner Approved Motorcycle) legislation. Basically, this means that there are two versions of the model in the range. The full noise, 58.5kW version for the rest of Australia and a restricted 24.6kW version for the three LAMs states.

The restriction amounts to spacers in the carbs which restrict the movement of the slides. It is an easy job to dispense with the restrictors once the provisional period is over and you are legally allowed to ride the full-spec version, though the legality of this is dubious if the bike carries a compliance plate stating it is a LAMs version. Replacing the restrictors would be the wise move when time comes to sell the machine.

So what’s the point of buying a gutless

650 when there is a perfectly good machine sitting next to it on the dealer’s floor? That’s a question many prospective customers will pose, but the answer is that it makes a lot of sense.

Firstly, buying a restricted machine which can be derestricted means you don’t have to trade up to another bike when the time comes, thus saving you a lot of money in the process. Secondly, and more importantly, is the way in which the restriction works. Limiting the throttle slides (and not the ignition or engine management) means that you still get the full performance of the machine until the slide restrictors come into play and you still get all of the handling performance of the machine, which has not been built down to match the power.

There is another benefit, however, and that is that the bike effectively switches off the power once the tachometer needle reaches 5800rpm. That means, for a learner, there is a manageable rev range that allows you to get used to how a bike operates, without having to worry about where in the full, 10,500rpm range the needle is sitting. It also means that the power delivery is gentle, predictable,



the GT650S. It's an incredibly simple thing, but allows a huge range of adjustment to the riding position and is a very nice detail.

This level of attention to detail is reflected in the rest of the bike. Build quality looks high, with the metal, 17-litre tank offering good range as well as accepting a magnetic tankbag. The pillion squab opens via the ignition key to reveal some storage, and a big red release button for the rider's seat.

The obvious competition in the market is from Suzuki's SV650S – park them side by side and it's easier to spot the similarities than the differences. Hyosung claims a little more power (58.5kW to 52.95) but a little more weight

(180kg to 171). The Hyosung has adjustable damping at the front, the Suzuki adjustable preload. The Suzuki, with its fuel injection is undoubtedly more sophisticated, but for a learner this is not necessarily the be all and end all. Long-term reliability and resale values are yet to be established for the Hyosung, but again, that is relative.

From an all-round perspective, the Suzuki shades the Hyosung, but there are two critical things that now come into play. The Hyosung is \$2191 cheaper than the Suzuki and it is LAMs legal.

And, for a beginner, that might be enough to make a difference. **tw**

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

So how does doubling the power make a bike behave? It's a question any owner would be over the moon to discover. With the Hyosung GT650, it's easy. Simply have your dealer remove the carb restrictors and there you are. We took the opportunity of testing a de-restricted GT650R alongside the restricted S-model with alacrity...

So what difference does more power make? The engine performance was, as you'd imagine, worlds apart. No longer hitting a horsepower ceiling at 5800rpm, the GTR pulled through to redline, with a nice throbbing note and a broad, flat powerband that was just as nice in its delivery as the restricted bike had been. Nice easy power at your command.

The extra go did highlight some handling quirks that were not apparent in restricted form, however. The principal one was a tendency for the rear shock to become a little overwhelmed when the pace was upped. It was a case of the damping not being quite matched to the spring and this manifested itself with the spring sagging under acceleration so the back end dropped and then, as the damping struggled to keep up, the back would go into a slow cycle of rebound and compression.

This sounds much worse than it was on the road, with the overall effect being a slight wallow in corners, and not much worse than most bikes. It was easy to ignore and certainly didn't hamper higher speed, more open road riding, though it was noticeable in tight, technical corners.

We raised the rear preload from the lowest setting to three notches up and this improved matters dramatically, raising the rear ride height and putting more weight on the front end. Actually altering the preload was a case of heave and grunt and skinned knuckles as the detents on the spring collar are quite heavily recessed and changing the preload was not something you'd want to do again and again (even if the set-up is easier to alter than would be the case with the threaded collar seen on many bikes these days).

Towards the end of the test loop, when the going became more open and the speeds rose, the Hyosung actually handled better than the Suzuki SV650S we had on the same test loop a week or so earlier, with none of the Suzuki's vague front end at speed. The engine felt smoother through the seat of the pants, too, although the Suzuki's urgent throb was by no means unpleasant.



The increased engine power and hence the increased speeds also highlighted the soft nature of the brakes, which lacked the aggressive urgency we've come to expect even if, once you get dialled in they are more than adequate. On the upside, their gentleness will appeal to learners who find aggressive front brakes a little intimidating.

Another quibble is the digital dash. The unit on the GTR proved as difficult as the S-model's, with buttons that were simply too hard to use.

Apart from that, the full power version proved just as pleasant to ride as the restricted version (and a lot more fun with the extra power). No matter what the shortcomings – and most of these could be easily overcome – it's a lot of bike for the money.

2005 HYOSUNG GT650S (1)

specs



ENGINE

Liquid-cooled, transverse-crank, 90-degree V-twin four-stroke engine. Chain-driven double overhead camshafts operating four valves per cylinder. Wet sump lubrication.

CLAIMED MAX. POWER..... 24.6kW at 5800rpm
[58.5kW at 9000rpm]

CLAIMED MAX. TORQUE..... NA [68.1Nm at 7500rpm]

BORE X STROKE..... 81.5 x 62mm

CAPACITY..... 647cc

COMPRESSION RATIO..... 11.5:1

MAX. ENGINE SPEED..... 10,500rpm

FUEL METERING..... 2 x Mikuni BDSR39mm CV carbs

TRANSMISSION

Gear primary drive through wet multi-plate clutch to six-speed constant-mesh gearbox. Chain final drive. Cable clutch actuation.

FRAMES & BRAKES

Tubular-steel trellis frame with box-section swingarm

Twin two-piston caliper disc brakes at the front. Single two-piston caliper disc brake at the rear. 3.00 x 17" front and 5.00 x 17" rear wheels.

CLAIMED FRONT SUSPENSION TRAVEL..... 120mm

CLAIMED REAR WHEEL TRAVEL..... 110mm

FRONT BRAKE DIAMETER..... 300mm

REAR BRAKE DIAMETER..... 230mm

FRONT TYRE..... Pirelli Diablo 120/60 ZR17(55W)

REAR TYRE..... Pirelli Diablo 160/60 ZR17(69W)

DIMENSIONS

CLAIMED DRY WEIGHT..... 180kg

SEAT HEIGHT..... 780mm

WHEELBASE..... 1435mm

RAKE/TRAIL..... 25.5°/NA

FUEL CAPACITY..... 17L

AVERAGE FUEL CONSUMPTION..... 6.6L/100km

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