

## TRIUMPH TIGER EXPLORER | GOODBYE



1. The Garmir zumo350LM was an invaluable addition
2. A hugger would be a solid investment
3. Brembo pads cured the lack of feel and bite



# Exploration Over

An adventure can be had anywhere, and the Explorer will make it happen

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PRICE NEW £11,199  
VALUE NOW £7500 TOTAL MILES 15,652  
OUR MPG 41 WEIGHT 259KG (WET)

This has been my most hardcore winter of biking in the 20 years that I've been riding motorcycles on the road. Not only has it been a pretty harsh winter weather-wise, with lashings of snow aplenty and stubbornly persistent ice, but the miles I've had to cover have also been well in excess of my norm.

Living 150 miles from the office means a couple of big commutes a week, and a minimum of 52 miles a day to my weeknight hovel – meaning that a light five days of commuting is always over 500 miles. I've seen -10°C a few times, and some of my biggest journeys happened to coincide with the very worst of the snow.

The Explorer floated through it all with alarming composure, looking after me when my hands and feet had long-since gone numb, when tiredness was eroding my senses, and the cold was biting at my face. The lack of heated grips was the only significant omission in the equation.

I grew to love the Explorer over winter for its dogged determination, that

peachy triple motor, comfort, resilience and flexibility. It took me everywhere I needed to be, and entertained me along the way – often stacked to the gunnels with luggage, and rarely given time off for its good behavior.

So what went wrong? Well, absolutely nothing. That's not to say that there have been no gripes along the way, but the way in which the Explorer delivers has impressed me deeply.

The gripes have been fairly minor, too. Wind noise, or specifically turbulence, was one (see right), and the poor stopping power was another – which was cured by a Brembo Road & Track pad upgrade. The seat was massively uncomfortable for the first few

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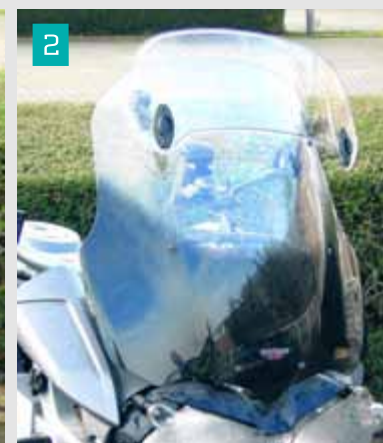
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thousand miles, but it either moulded to the shape of my arse, or vice versa (my money would be on the former), and I had no complaints about the comfort levels or riding position thereafter.

The only real disappointment was the slightly noisy motor on start-up and an equally noisy primary drive rattle when not in gear. The steady degradation of some of the finishes on painted areas was also a shame. Let's not dodge the fact that this winter has been one of the saltiest, wettest and most persistently filthy I've ever experienced, but with the vast majority of the Explorer coming up immaculate after each wash, the very few areas that didn't stuck out like a sore appendage.

It got a serious clean once a week regardless of the weather or miles covered, and then everything was lubed and most of the bike covered in a thick layer of Scottoiler FS365 – but the weather still ate away at a few parts, bubbling the paint on some casings and linkages. Hopefully Triumph can address these easily as the overwhelming majority of it looked showroom after each clean.

But the Tiger is no longer with me, having been de-fleeted after a year of exemplary service. It's an extremely accomplished bike, especially for a first generation model – a genuine Triumph, in both senses of the word.



## SCREEN WARS

A problem that seems to dog most big adventure bikes is wind turbulence. Every one I've ridden has suffered from it to some degree, but the Explorer seems to suffer more than most, so I embarked on a three-screen swap-fest to see how much of the problem could be cured.

First up was a little trick I'd heard about from other Explorer owners – get some longer bolts and space the standard screen about 20mm further out from the subframe to create two airflows towards the rider. I'd say this made a small difference, but it didn't really impact on the thudding turbulence, so I called MRA specialist HPS (bikehps.com) to try two versions of their MRA screens – the Vario (1), and the X-screen (2). They both employ the spacer idea as part of their solution, but also both feature adjustable spoilers

to further split and diffuse the airflow. The only real difference between the two is the size of the 'wing', and the mechanism for adjusting its pitch. For me, the smaller of the two actually worked better on several fronts. The on-the-move adjustability means you can vary the spoiler angle according to your speed and conditions, ensuring the airflow it creates is more tailored. Going through town? Drop it down out of sight. Pull out onto the motorway? Set it higher and feel the benefit. It almost completely eliminates buffeting, and while the wind noise is still loud, the airflow is at least steady, and entirely bearable with earplugs in.

The larger X-screen is harder to find an optimal position and the fiddly adjusters make it an off-bike faff to set the angle.

Spacers & bolts - £3.12 from B&Q; MRA Vario - £79.00 (www.bikehps.com); MRA X-screen - £109.00 (www.bikehps.com).