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WILD RIDE
African Desert on a DR650

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November/December 2014



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PROJECT BIKE

THE BIG BAD

ADV MOTO PROJECT
BMW R1200GSW BEAST



WOLF

by Joshua Farnsworth
photos by Paul Friedlander

Call it evolution or revolution, the fully equipped 2014 *BMW R1200GS* may be the most technologically advanced adventure bike ever built. Dial in the advanced electronics for the prevailing riding conditions and you get one gnarly machine capable of motoring through almost any terrain. *BMW* has an obvious emphasis on creature comforts and the lack of standard protection would lead you to believe this bike is only meant for the road, but don't let this wolf in sheep's clothing fool you—it can be a hardy off-road beast ready for your next epic adventure as long as you're willing to spend the extra money to outfit your rig. Starting from a blank slate, *ADVMoto* set out to create an aggressive, trail-ready heavyweight.

TIP: If you're in the market for a *GS* and you plan to leave the pavement, be sure to select the optional cross-spoke wheels for strength and repairability.

Protecting the power plant—*AltRider's* integrated crash bars and skid plate are brilliantly engineered to distribute the impact energy away from the motor.

The weight of the GS can generate a lot of force in an impact and, with cylinder heads completely exposed, this is one of its more obvious vulnerabilities. *AltRider's* integrated crash bar and skid plate for the water boxer offers an impressive design providing comprehensive protection around the motor. The 1.25"-diameter crash bars are the largest on the market, yielding incredible strength with less flex on impact. The 3/16"-thick skid plate provides smooth tire-to-tire protection with no mounting hardware on the bottom to get buggered up from off-road use.

Installation of the integrated system is simple and straightforward. The main front mounting brackets bolt to the frame and serve as the lower front mounting point for both the crash bars and skid plate. This design smartly avoids the more commonly used engine mounting points that would transfer significant point force directly to the motor on impact. *AltRider* also takes an innovative approach for the rear mounting points of the skid plate by utilizing the center stand joints to form a rigid front-to-back exoskeleton. I tested the rigidity of the system when I clipped a large boulder after a miscalculation. The crash bars performed perfectly to protect the cylinder heads from the impact.

When selecting crash protection for your bike, be aware that the black powder coat option quickly shows battle scars, whereas the silver has subtler wear characteristics. A notable design drawback is the ineffectiveness of the small



cutout on the skid plate for accessing the oil drain plug. You can easily get to the plug but it gets messy when the flow reduces toward the end, allowing oil to collect on the top of the skid plate. Overall, *AltRider's* clever design provides exceptional engine protection.



TIP: Keep your cool—the water boxer's radiator is vital to keeping the engine cool. Unfortunately the location makes it susceptible to punctures from sticks or other trail debris. We added the easy-to-install *AltRider Radiator Guard* to deflect the debris without disrupting the cooling performance.



Optics and air flow—the Ztechnik VStream Sport windscreen offers a rugged windshield upgrade with taller and tinted options.

The V-shaped design is optically clear with no noticeable distortion (even through the dark tint). The VStream offers a quiet ride at a fraction of the cost of the OEM replacement and is compatible with the adjustment mechanism. The 3mm FMR hard-coated polycarbonate material is high quality and I aggressively tested the product for its scratch and impact resistance. A three-year warranty makes this a clear choice for replacing the OEM windscreen. For additional wind protection consider the taller VStream Touring in either the clear or tinted option.

TIP: If you plan to spend hours standing on the pegs two easy upgrades will give you greater bike control with reduced fatigue:

1. A wider foot peg like the *Black Dog Cycle Works (BDCW) Platform Footpegs* adds stability, comfort, and improved maneuverability.
2. *ROX* handlebar risers allow you to adjust your bars up and back to make your stance more vertical, unloading weight from your wrists and forearms as well as relaxing your neck.



Delivering the payload—Giant Loop's Siskiyou panniers offer a worthy alternative to hard luggage for carrying your adventure essentials.

Hard luggage can present several challenges off road—the bulky design can make it difficult to navigate tight trails and may trap your foot under the case during a minor fall. A rugged alternative is *Giant Loop's Siskiyou* panniers, which are smartly constructed from a super tough “trucker’s tarp” material capable of handling the abuse of dual-sport travel. The unique rackless design offers a lightweight and sturdy bag system that mounts and dismounts in minutes. Capacity is surprisingly plentiful and the bag offers some give for awkwardly shaped items. The 70 liters of total capacity offer two more liters than the optional *BMW Vario* hard cases.

Multiple lash points create versatility for top-mounting gear, dry bags, and virtually anything else you can think of. After riding two days in a hard rain, the bags proved to be fairly water resistant but the added waterproof removable liners kept the contents bone dry. Heat shields mount to the exhaust to protect from the extreme heat; so far I’ve not had any issues with the bags being in constant contact with the heat shield during long rides.

Be aware that the bags can wear the paint at the points of contact so make sure to use a vinyl protective film to prevent damage. A notable drawback to soft luggage is the limited ability to securely lock up your gear while away from the bike. Soft luggage is not for everyone but if you are in the market for panniers of any kind, *Giant Loop* has options that may fit the bill at a relatively affordable price.



CYA—comfort upgrades like the *Saddlemen's Adventure TRACK* seat reduce fatigue and make your journey more enjoyable.

Adventure riders spend a lot of time on and over the saddle. If the saddle is too wide you get good comfort while seated, but standing on the pegs can be awkward. If too narrow you quickly get the requisite sore ass. Luckily, *Saddlemen Motorcycle Seats* offers a rugged, purpose-built design perfect for the demands of long-distance adventure riding.

You can choose from their high quality pre-fabricated replacement saddles or work with the design team for a custom option using your existing seat pan. For our *GS* project bike, we opted to customize the optional *BMW Rallye* seat based on the *Saddlemen Adventure TRACK* design. The thoughtful placement of seams to avoid pressure points, along with the added *Saddlegel* inserts, deliver unparalleled comfort in a saddle designed for true adventure riding. During the process, the designer took the time to understand our specific needs to get the contours and gel placement just right. We chose to cover the seat with their “gripper” material to give stable contact while riding standing or seated. The quality of materials and impeccable workmanship make this a worthy and extremely durable upgrade for those long days in the saddle.

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TIP: To transport your winch, *WARN* offers several bike-specific stow plates. To maintain the option of carrying the winch with *Giant Loop Siskiyou* panniers, *BDCW* has the *Multi-Function Rear Rack* that is pre-drilled to accept the compact *F800GS* stow plate. This setup keeps the winch far enough back to preserve the area across the panniers for carrying additional gear.

When things don't go as planned—*WARN* offers the *XT17* portable winch that will keep you moving even when caught in a bind.

Although never recommended, I sometimes ride alone. Getting your bike stuck in deep mud is a quick reminder why that is a bad idea. When a buddy tow is nowhere in sight, the *WARN XT17* winch becomes your new best friend.

The *XT17* is specifically designed for motorcycles/ATVs and at only 8.5 pounds it can pull up to an impressive 1,700 pounds over 40 feet on bike battery power. You have to carry additional equipment for operation: the power cable, the wired remote control, a tree saver strap, and additional rigging straps. But it's quick and easy to use when needed. This versatile solution can be used at any angle of attack and you can even get creative and rig the winch to remove a downed tree blocking the trail.

There are two optional kits for operating the winch—a handlebar-mounted control or the corded remote. We chose the wired remote for additional versatility and ease transfer from bike to bike. Unfortunately there's no easy disconnect on the winch for the wired remote.

Visual appeal with purpose—*Ilmberger* offers stunning carbon body trim replacements that save weight without compromising strength.

So why did we put all that carbon fiber on an adventure bike? Admittedly, looks were a big driver but carbon fiber is a high performance upgrade, offering improved ruggedness with up to 70% weight savings per part. *Ilmberger Carbon Parts* offers high quality 100% carbon fiber replacement parts for most of the original fairing and trim pieces. They use a unique clear plastic coating, giving the carbon structure outstanding visual depth that is *TUV*-certified for its resistance to scratching and UV damage. Not all carbon parts are created equal—*Ilmberger* uses the same materials and manufacturing process used for *Moto GP* racing parts. Their products are worth every penny.





SUMMARY

The devil is in the details—we rounded out the final design of our project bike with several visual and functional enhancements that completed our aggressive design concept. The custom paint scheme highlights the lines of the bike and celebrates the *BMW* racing heritage. Micro-sized *Rizoma* turn indicators were added for their ability to tuck in tightly, eliminating the vulnerability of the OEM stalks. For auxiliary lighting, the *Rigid Industries Specter* driving lights with *BDCW* fork mounts beam an astonishing 3,000+ lumens and are less vulnerable to damage than typical side-mounted auxiliary lights. Finally, we installed the *Remus Titanium HexaCone* full exhaust system to add a boost in performance and give this wolf one menacing growl. **ADV**

Product	Website	Price (USD)
Remus HexaCone Titanium Full Exhaust System	RemusUSA.com	\$1,570
Saddlemen's Adventure TRACK Custom Seat	Saddlemen.com	\$600
Custom Paint	Cycle-Finish.com	\$1,600
Warn XT17 Portable Winch	Warn.com	\$549
Giant Loop Siskiyou Panniers	GiantLoopMoto.com	\$700
BDCW Multi-Function Rear Rack (with Winch Stow Plate)	BlackDogCW.com	\$285
Altrider Integrated Crash Bars and Skid Plate	AltRider.com	\$790
Altrider Radiator Guard Set	AltRider.com	\$150
Altrider Headlight Guard	AltRider.com	\$146
Altrider Side Stand Foot Enlarger	AltRider.com	\$58
Ilmberger CF Front/ Rear Fenders	Ilmberger-carbon.com	\$783
Ilmberger CF Frame Inserts Set	Ilmberger-carbon.com	\$440
Ilmberger CF Injector Cover Set	Ilmberger-carbon.com	\$494
Ilmberger CF Air tube/Radiator Cover Set	Ilmberger-carbon.com	\$906
Ilmberger CF Instrument Trim Set	Ilmberger-carbon.com	\$302
Ilmberger CF Heal Protector Set	Ilmberger-carbon.com	\$274
Rizoma Billet Aluminum Gas Cap	Rizoma.com	\$233
Rizoma Frame Hole Cap Kit	Rizoma.com	\$200
Rizoma Turn Indicators (4)	Rizoma.com	\$420
BDCW Premium Fork Light Kit (Black Dog foot pegs and multi-function rear rack for winch)	BlackDogCW.com	\$430
Rox 2" Risers	RoxSpeedFX.com	\$135
Machineart Moto MudSling	MachineArtMoto.com	\$149