



Michigan
Sport Touring Riders Report

March 2023

Editor – Rachel Durling

Gimme Some Farkles!

By: Steve Gross

It's rare that I buy a bike built in the same decade of my purchase. The first time was in 1997 when I bought a 1997 Ural—to date, the only brand spanking new motor vehicle I have ever bought. The second was in 2015, when I bought a slightly used 2015 BMW S1000R. I wrote a couple articles about how I turned that naked bike into a reasonably capable sport-tourer. In January of 2023 I did it again, buying a 2020 BMW R1250GS at **BMW Motorcycles of Southeast Michigan**—also slightly used by the previous owner.

The original owner had equipped the bike with a full set of Mosko Moto luggage, and a BMW Vario top case but otherwise the bike was 100% stock. Admittedly, a 100% stock GS with luggage is already a pretty good sport-tourer, but who buys a new bike and leaves it alone? Not this guy!



I started with some crash protection. It's a total bummer to (for example) low-side 100 miles away from the hotel—made worse if you can't ride back because there's a hole in your engine letting all the oil out. There is a huge variety of crash protection for GS bikes, but much of it is designed for off-road use. The GS is already a wide bike, thanks to the boxer motor configuration, so I didn't want to make it even wider with big metal engine guards. I settled on X-Head 1250 high-density polyethylene (HDPE) cylinder head guards from MachineArt Moto. These replace the plastic OEM spark plug covers but are much thicker and protect all the vulnerable areas of the magnesium valve cover. Perhaps a little spendy at \$229 but they are well-made, bolting on relatively easily to existing threaded holes in the valve cover. The holes lined up perfectly on one side of the bike but took a little finagling to line up on the other side. They are compatible with the BMW accessory lower crash bars, and possibly other crash bars as well, in case I decide to add those later. The only other crash protection I have added so far is bar-end sliders (\$30), front axle sliders (\$50), and a swingarm slider (\$30) all from R&G

Racing. Maybe I'll get some folding brake and clutch levers, but the OEM ones are already notched to provide a sacrificial breaking point and leave enough remaining lever to get back to the hotel.

Next up: electric stuff! On my S1000R, I went old-school with the electrics. I used a simple 3-circuit accessory fuse panel from Eastern Beaver to provide ignition-switched power for my heated jacket controller, radar detector, and GPS. This is a very inexpensive solution, but it is kind of bulky and the under-seat areas on the GS are weirdly small so I wasn't sure it would fit. I also wanted to see what new stuff came out in the 7 years since I last looked, and what I found was the CANsmart II from Denali Electronics. This is very compact, since it uses solid state relays rather than fuses for circuit protection. But its real party trick (besides size) is that it sits on the bike's CAN bus so it can do a lot more than just provide ignition-switched circuits. Denali makes CANsmart versions for different bikes including my GS, so I ordered one. Not cheap at \$285 but I liked the plug-and-play approach and the easy configurability—it connects to your laptop over USB, and you set it up with nice graphical user interface, not a million presses of tiny little buttons. It also comes with a set of wiring harnesses designed for Denali accessories.



The CANsmart provides 4 circuits. I used one for a license-plate-mounted brake light (also from Denali). Wildly overpriced at \$200 new, I got a used one from a fellow MSTR member. It

plugs right into the CANsmart harness, although I had to drill a hole in the undertail for the wiring. It is incredibly bright, and the CANsmart can even strobe it when you apply the brakes—either every time or only on “emergency” braking (the CANsmart can tell the difference between normal and emergency braking based on watching the CANbus messages). You can also configure it to light up with engine braking, even if you don't actually apply the brakes. There is a cheaper version (\$125) available with fewer LEDs—frankly, even the cheaper version should be plenty bright, the one I have is truly blinding.

I used the second circuit for the Denali Sound Bomb air horn. More reasonably priced than the brake lights at \$69, plus another \$40 for a mount designed specifically for the GS. Once again, plug-and-play with the Denali harness, it is so loud that I had to wear hearing protection while testing it out. Loud horns save lives!

Third circuit went for my heated jacket. On my S1000R, I mounted a Gerbing controller on the bike because I find the portable ones annoying. They are always falling off, or I can't find a good place to clip them, or I get tangled in the extra wires. I was going to do the same for the GS, but then I learned that the CANsmart can directly control heated gear from the heated grip controller, with two different heat levels (*not enough and way too much*) available. Dear BMW, there's a reason the story is not about Goldilocks and the TWO Bears. This was the only non-plug-and-play bit of the install, as I had to modify one of the provided CANsmart wiring harnesses to work with my Gerbing jacket connector.

The fourth circuit is for driving lights. I don't ride too much at night, and the wiring harness is a bit of a pain to install (to do it properly, you need to remove the gas tank and a bunch of plastic) so I skipped these for now. Denali has lighting options from \$250 to (yikes) almost \$700, and a \$70 GS-specific mounting kit. The CANsmart has some cool light-related features—you can dim the lights from the wonderwheel, have them strobe when you honk the horn or flash the high

beams, etc. Once again, all controlled from the existing bike controls—no dodgy extra switches to mount.

On my S1000R, the radar detector wiring is kind of finicky and has a lot of messy wires—mainly because my Valentine One radar detector does not have a built-in headphone jack. It's a little cleaner on the GS thanks to a convenient 12V ignition-switched socket up near the handlebars. I got a cable to convert from the BMW socket to a regular cigarette-lighter socket and plug the radar detector power cord into that in my tank bag. As a bonus, the radar detector power cord also has a couple of USB charging ports to charge my phone and any other USB stuff in the tank bag. I may further modify these cords to get rid of some excess length, which right now is just zip-tied into a bundle in the tank bag. For the radar detector output, I just use a simple LED flasher Velcro-ed to the GPS mount, which is perfectly in my line of sight. Much better than on the S1000R where I could never find a great spot to mount the LED flasher.

Garmin Zumo XT devices—and even if it were, you would lose the wonderwheel control. The Nav VI on my bike was wonky right in the showroom, but BMWMCSEM sent it to Garmin for exchange.



Speaking of GPS, here BMW makes everything easy by prepping the bike for the BMW Navigator system. The original owner sprang for this, which allows me to control the GPS from the wonderwheel. Unfortunately, the Nav VI hardware (made by Garmin) is notoriously flaky, and the mount is not compatible with the latest

I mentioned that the original owner also equipped the bike with Mosko Moto soft luggage. This is more or less the same as the BMW Atacama soft luggage—Mosko Moto formerly produced the Atacama stuff for BMW. My bike came with the Backcountry 35-liter panniers and mounting system, Backcountry 40-liter duffel bag, and Hood tank bag. This stuff is super high quality, looks great, and (according to the forums anyway) is very waterproof. The off-road guys swear by this kind of soft luggage because it fits better down narrow trails and doesn't get destroyed in crashes. I also found a pair of used Vario panniers on the ADVrider forum flea market (\$600) and had them re-keyed for my bike key. I guess I will try both the hard and soft bags and see which I like better.



That pretty much takes care of the farkles, unless I find a good deal on a pair of cast wheels. My bike has the spoked wheels, I guess these may be better off road, but I hate cleaning spokes! I think the cast wheels are also lighter than the spokes.

I bought a BMW-backed unlimited-mile extended warranty (4 years starting after the factory warranty expires, for \$1300) so my plan now is to just ride the heck out of my GS this year and see if I could maybe even make it my only modern bike. Stay tuned, I might have a 2015 S1000R for sale soon!

A special thanks to Steve Gross for his articles and pictures featured this month.

Remember... All published articles earn a free breakfast, entry into the year-end newsletter drawing AND your fellow members and the newsletter editor will appreciate your articles. You will also earn points toward the **2023 MOTY Awards!**



MSTR 2023 Rides

Here is a listing of the next few MSTRiding events for this year. For a full list of our 2023 events, please check the MSTR website (www.mstriders.com) and go to the *Events* page. If you are interested in volunteering to organize a new event please send an email to ridership@mstriders.com.

Note: MSTRider membership is required to attend an MSTR riding event. We will not be able to add your name to an event sign-up list unless you are a current MSTRider or until your New MSTRider Form or MSTRider Renewal form and fee are received. Go to www.mstriders.com, then navigate to the Resources page and scroll down to the **New MSTRider Form** or the **MSTRider Renewal Form**.

2023 MSTR Michigan That's... Unique Grand Tour

The grand tour returns for 2023. The theme this year will be unique things to see in Michigan and will be called the *2023 Michigan That's... Unique Grand Tour*. It will once again take you all over the lower peninsula and the upper peninsula, to give you a good chance to enjoy some of the things that Michigan has to offer. As in the past, this is an event to do at your own pace, on your own schedule, alone or with one or more friends. You can visit as many of the checkpoints as your time and energy permit. When visiting a checkpoint, you will simply take a photo of your motorcycle with the Grand Tour sign and the checkpoint behind as shown in the photo, and then send your photos to me for proof of your visit.



Basically, the grand tour is simply 14 destinations, and an excuse to get out on your motorcycle and ride around our great lake state. If you think you might like to participate but don't

know if you will find the time to do all 14 checkpoints, sign up to receive the information packet anyway. There's no obligation to visit any checkpoints, just a lot of great places to go and things to see if you do.

At the end of the year, we'll tally up the results, and give awards at the MOTY banquet to participants who completed the grand tour. The grand tour will run from Saturday, March 25 to Sunday, November 19.

If you have participated in the past, I'll send out all the information with rules, a list of checkpoints, the sign to hang on your motorcycle, and a .gpx file with all of the checkpoints. If you haven't participated in the past, you can sign up at any meeting, or send an email to keithmdanielson@gmail.com, and I'll send the information out. See you out on the road.

MoArk Adventure 15

April 12 to April 15, 2023
Missouri/Arkansas



This ride is a "curve-chaser's" delight. There are three days of riding, with 1,000 tire-shredding miles in the Ozark's to start out your riding season. Check your tires for tread prior to this ride, the roads here will chew them up aggressively. Many riders have shown up with "I think" tires and ended up buying expensive tires mid-ride and losing a day of riding. If in doubt, mount new tires.

The MoArk event begins in Farmington, Missouri. We'll meet there for dinner on Wednesday, April 12th. There will be a mandatory **point** rider meeting around 8:00 or 8:30pm and then a mandatory rider meeting at 9:00pm to sign a waiver and put riding groups together. On Thursday morning you can choose one of three routes from Farmington to Mountain Home, Arkansas. We'll then be staying Thursday, April 13th and Friday, April 14th in Mountain Home. On Friday you have a choice of five loop routes (or make up your own) where you'll be riding on some of the best roads in Arkansas. On Saturday you again have a choice of three routes to return to Farmington, Missouri from Mountain Home, arriving mid-afternoon and then prepare for the ride or trailer trip back to Michigan.

To join us for MoArk 15 get your name on the sign-up list by sending an email to Ian as shown below. Event information including hotel information, a rider package and GPS routes will only be provided to those who have signed up.

Event Organizer: Ian Orr
Email: mclorr1198@gmail.com

mr2

Michigan Renegade Mountain Ride
May 14th to May 20th, 2023
Waynesville, NC

There will be two days of travel and five days of riding on some of the best motorcycle roads in the US. We stay at one location and, each day, chose from any one of 20 different routes. Most MSTRiders will ride 1,000 to 1,500 miles so be sure to have good tires with lots of tread.

The ride begins in Waynesville, NC at the mandatory rider's meeting at the hotel on Sunday, May 14th at 8pm to sign waivers and put riding groups together. The rider's meetings continue each evening until Thursday.



The hotel's remote location ensures a quiet and relaxing stay. Participants can bring or purchase food to make their own onsite breakfasts and dinners or drive/ride 5-10 minutes to one of the many restaurants in Waynesville. There is an onsite BBQ grill available for our use. About one week before the event starts, we'll select one or two warm and dry evenings to have an onsite group cookout. Those who want to join in can either bring their own food for the cookout or pick it up at a local grocery store.

To join us for **mr2** send an email to Ian as noted below. Event information including hotel & local restaurant information, Rider Packages and GPS routes will only be provided to those who have signed up. Be sure to make your hotel reservations early.

Event Organizer: Ian Orr
Email: mclorr1198@gmail.com

HT2
Hocking Hills Twisty Tour
June 15 – 18, 2023
Logan, Ohio

June is a time when people are busy with family activities, and it is sometimes a little hot and humid. So, the idea was to put together a weekend ride as close to home as possible. Hmm, a ride in the Hocking Hills seems like a good idea.

Based in Logan, Ohio, the hotel is about 260 miles from Livonia by freeway or about 60 miles closer than Marietta. That's close enough that you could even work Thursday, slab it down to Logan Thursday evening, and get 3 days of good riding for the cost of only 1 day off. Since the ride home is only 4 hours, you can ride for a while on Sunday before heading north.

What's old is new again.

Back in the day, Don and Jan Pennington ran a ride in the Hocking Hills, so we are keeping the name, Hocking Hills Twisty Tour, in their honor. The routes cover the Hocking Hills and down around the southern tip of Ohio. They only briefly touch the edge of the roads we ride around Marietta, so for most of us, the roads are all new.

Most of the routes go down to the Ohio River and one route has lunch at Miller's Chicken in Athens. That's a really cool local joint that is not to be missed. I'm hoping to get points from Dave and Lee Ann Marcotte for that one. Going further with the relaxed weekend idea, most of the rides have really good lunch places and are less than 250 miles, so you can get back to the hotel, have a shower, and relax before dinner.

We will be staying at the MainStay Suites/Sleep Inn in Logan, Ohio. This is a 2-in-1 hotel with the MainStay rooms a little cheaper. It's also a newer hotel with a friendly staff and a decent breakfast. For dinner, we have 3 tasty restaurants in walking distance.

I don't know why, but room blocks seem to be unpopular with some hotels these days. Your plan should be to sign up for the Choice Hotels rewards program and book your room as early as possible. I booked my room in March and got a rate of \$110, but this area is a place that folks from Columbus come for the weekend. I have seen summer rates for this hotel and the next-door Holiday Inn Express in the \$250 to \$275 range, so book early.

I will be bringing sign-up sheets to meeting or you can email me to be put on the list.

Event Organizer: Jac Brown
Email: jac.brown999@gmail.com

I look forward to seeing you there. It is a beautiful area with some great roads and it's always good to discover someplace new or rediscover someplace that you haven't been in a while.

MSTR Newsletter & Website

The MSTR Newsletter and Website (www.mstriders.com) belong to you, the riders. They both can only be as good and as interesting as you make them. If you have something to say about a ride, your bike, perhaps a trip you are planning, whatever, send it in for the newsletter and/or website to:

Rachel Durling:
(communications@mstriders.com)

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MSTR Photo Gallery

The MSTR maintains a Smug Mug photo gallery (<https://mstriders.smugmug.com/>) to allow riders to upload and download pictures of various club events. Upload and download passwords are sent out to participants for each event. Click on the above link or visit the MSTR website and select the MSTR Photo Gallery link to check out all the event pictures.

Pictures from 2022 MoArk:



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