RATED

THE FACTS

What is it? A police-led rider-safety initiative. Price? £65. What’s included? A one-day classroom session with light refreshments (Covid-permitting), assessed ride with a serving police officer and goody bag that includes a copy of the Highway Code. Where is it? UK-wide with each police force running its own course where it can be Covid-safe and socially distanced. Duration? Bases – 3pm classroom session times vary. Separate assessed ride. Where can I stay? There should be a course in your local area. Do I need my own bike? Yes. Contact www.bikesafe.co.uk

THE BIKE

Able to reach 90mph in less than three seconds, cover a quarter of a mile in under ten seconds and hit 186mph, the 2021 Suzuki Hayabusa makes for the ideal machine for an assessed ride with an on-duty police rider...

THE POLICE BIKE

Every year, BMW makes a run of dedicated factory-built emergency service R1250RTs that are sold all over the world. This 2020 model comes without semi-active suspension to make it faster to fix and has a calibrated standard speedo (the officer wears a body-cam to record evidence), sirens, blue lights, narrow panniers and a radio. It also has a very loud bull horn.

THE POLICE OFFICER

Ye s an on-duty police rider...

THE RIDER

Now 44 years old, Jon has been riding the road since he was 16 and has spent the last 20 years road testing for various motorcycle magazines. Having previously avoided it, he has recently completed several advanced riding courses including the ERS and Rapid Training.

THE COACH

PC Simon Burgin, 50, has been a serving police motorcyclist with Cambridgeshire Constabulary since 2002 and works policing the roads as well as VIP escorting. During his work as an Forensic Collisions Investigator, he has attended numerous incidents involving motorcycles. A passionate biker, he owns an FJR1300 and is planning a month-long tour when he retires from the police next year.

THE LOCATION

Bikesafe is run by each individual regional police force. Our course was organised by Cambridgeshire Constabulary but due to Covid restrictions, our ‘classroom’ season happened outdoors. Most 2021 Bikesafe R1250RT courses will happen in a police HQ and will be Covid-safe and socially distanced.

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RIDER TRAINING

Sharing the roads with these idiots. Just because you have the right of way doesn't mean you are safe and you need to tailor your riding to take into account these factors.” So how does BikeSafe do this?

A major part of BikeSafe is the classroom aspect. Concentrating on a wide range of aspects of motocycling including behaviour, attitude, hazard awareness, filtering, junctions, cornering, group riding, overtaking and observation, the sessions are delivered in a really engaging way that actually makes you sit up, think and take notice. Using computer simulations, BikeSafe’s instructors run through various scenarios and actively invite the pupils to chat through what they see, what they think about it and what they feel went wrong or how the collision could have been prevented. There are no right or wrong answers; it’s all about starting a discussion and it really makes you think about the dangers out there. Especially when the officers recount real incidents.

For me, this was the hardest-hitting part of an offensive haircut. For me, this was the hardest-hitting part.

Scenarios and actively invite the pupils to chat through the classroom teaching than the instant ‘incidents’ were visually hard-hitting and made you think about that. Did you know, for example, that filtering is 100% legal if done correctly. You are allowed to overtake on double solid-white lines in circumstances where certain vehicles are slow moving or stationary. It’s updated every three years, so how out of date is your knowledge?

Rider training schools can’t offer it. It really makes you think, which is exactly what BikeSafe is aiming to do. And then there is the assessed ride.

BikeSafe is that in my role as a Collisions Investigator I don’t have to deal with motorcyclists, I want to see them at a bike meet or out enjoying their bike and know they will return home safely. You may have spotted I haven’t used the term ‘accident’ here. That’s because accidents aren’t preventable but collisions are – think about that.

We’ve done it too!

RIDER readers share their experience of BikeSafe

‘It made me safer’

martin welch,
61
bike
z1000sx
years riding:
40
I did BikeSafe in 2011 and it certainly helped my riding and my awareness of other traffic and potential hazards, stuff I didn’t really consider while driving a car. I had returned to two wheels after a long break and this got my head back into ‘bike’ mode and I feel made me safer and more observant as a result. It represents excellent value for money.’

‘A yearly refresher’

Peter turklow,
65
bike
z1000sx
years riding:
39
I’ve done several BikeSafe courses in a few different regions and have loved every single one. They offer a real insight into rapid, but safe, progress and are recommended. My wife took up riding in 2003 and we now use BikeSafe as a yearly refresher as we are both more summer riders and it is nice to get a professional giving us pointers.’

SAVE MONEY ON YOUR INSURANCE

As principle sponsor for BikeSafe, DirectVet Insurance offers policy holders 10% off a BikeSafe course as well as a 10% discount on their insurance-policy renewal when they complete the course if purchased through DirectVet (T&Cs apply). “There is nothing but benefit to be found from completing a BikeSafe course,” said Tom Warsop, DirectVet’s Head of Marketing.

THREE THINGS I LEARNED...

Classroom learning works

When you hear you have to sit through six hours of classroom-based tuition, the instant reaction is: “That will be dull.” However, BikeSafe’s course was really interesting and informative and not boring at all. The computer-generated ‘incidents’ were visually hard-hitting and made you think without going down the video-arty approach of watching an actual collision, which none of us want to watch, and the fact that serving police officers then talk about genuine incidents in your local area on roads you know really hits home. It was informative, interesting and a real eye-opener.

1 Read the Highway Code

When was the last time you read, or at least skimmed through, the Highway Code? Like me, probably when you were trying to pass your test. Simon describes it as your ‘get out of jail card’ and it’s true – if you know your rights, you can ride with more confidence. Did you know, for example, that filtering is 100% legal if done correctly. You are allowed to overtake on double solid-white lines in circumstances where certain vehicles are slow moving or stationary. It’s updated every three years, so how out of date is your knowledge?

2 Use all the road

Motorists’ brains are tuned into the road positioning forms part of the assessed ride.

The principle of motorcyclists is to get a professional giving us pointers.”

3 Value for money . . . . .

When you speak to a serving police officer who has dealt with the aftermath of multiple road collisions, it reinforces the reality that the emphasis is on you to keep yourself safe, not other road users. Add to this the fact that the people running the course are so passionate, about not only safety but also riding bikes, really comes across and, for £65, it is a bargain across and, for £65, it is a bargain.