## FIELD TESTED By Scott Brady



### 2015 Yamaha Super Ténéré ES

The segment's most reliable offering receives several notable upgrades, bringing it closer to being the ideal global adventurer.

was deep into Baja Sur, Mexico, having spent much of the week riding dirt tracks with the venerable Super Ténéré. My evaluation of Yamaha's newest 1200 had two priorities: test the new suspension and electronics package released with the 2014 model, and evaluate the bike as an option for my Trans-Africa trip next year. The 2013 Super Ténéré won the Value Award in our comprehensive adventure motorcycle test last year (*Adventure Motorcycles*, Spring 2014), and has developed a legitimate following among dual-sport travelers around the globe. The Super T has defined itself as one of the most durable and reliable big adventure bikes, certainly a desirable attribute when planning a cross-continent trip.

#### **Specifications**

#### 2015 Yamaha Super Ténéré ES

- · Cost: \$16,190
- Displacement: 1199cc, liquid-cooled DOHC 2-cylinder
- · Output: 110 hp, 85.7 lb-ft torque
- · Weight (wet): 584 lb
- · Wheels: 19-in front, 17-in rear
- · Fuel capacity: 6.1 gal
- · Suspension travel: 7.5-in front/rear



#### Special Thanks

Overland Journal would like to extend our appreciation to Jim Hyde and the RawHyde World of Adventure program, a resource for both journalists and the adventure motorcycling community. Each year, World of Adventure hosts an industry ride of the best bikes and new products on the market and tests them during a week of remote backcountry travel.

The test bike was modified with Clearwater lights, AltRider protection, Jesse Luggage, and Sava MC60 dirt tires mounted on wheels from Woody's Wheel Works. I rode half of the ride with the factory Bridgestone Battle Wing tires as well.

#### Changes with 2014

A few significant improvements occurred with the 2014 model, including the much-anticipated electronic suspension (ES) and unified brake system (UBS). One of the challenges we encountered with the previous variant was its limited suspension travel (7.5 inches) and ground clearance when compared with competitive models. While the new suspension still only affords the same travel, the addition of ES allows the rider to increase

preload with the push of a button and adjust rebound and compression settings to reduce hard bottoming on higher speed dirt tracks. Once back on the pavement, the suspension can be softened for touring comfort. I found this system to work as adver-

The Yamaha is a serious adventure platform with an exceptionally reliable drivetrain.

tised and to be particularly effective on the rugged tracks of Baja, where on the dirt I would push the preload setting to "two riders and luggage" and run the valving on standard or hard. In this configuration I could increase speed and minimize abuse to the skid plate.

A few other systems were included with the 2014 change, most notably the cruise control and standard heated grips. Though cruise control may seem like a luxury, it allows for longer ride times with less fatigue and I find it to be a welcome relief. The heated grips, which are now adjustable from a "taking the edge off" to "first degree burn" level, are also a blessing on long, cold rides. Other improvements to note are the adjustable windscreen and wide foot pegs fitted with compression rubber inserts. The inserts compress under your weight when standing on the pegs, allowing the soles of your boots to connect with the aluminum peg cleats.

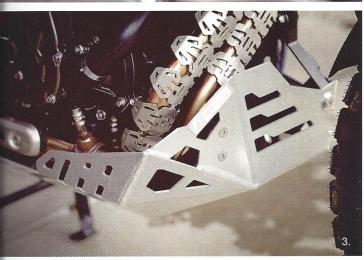
During my time in Baja with the Super Ténéré I only had a few minor complaints. The most concerning was a brake light switch failure on the front lever, which developed after a few days of hard rain. I discovered the issue when trying to deactivate the cruise control—it was an exciting moment when the engine tried to push through the brakes as I leaned into a high-speed curve. Windscreen adjustment, which requires several minutes to change position, is awkward. Final criticisms include the (very) limited ground clearance and the 6-gallon fuel capacity, which yields a 240-mile range under the best of conditions. This was most obvious in Baja, where I barely made it from the fuel stop north of Guerrero Negro to the Pemex station at El Rosario (223 miles). Despite these few complaints, the Yamaha is a serious adventure platform with an exceptionally reliable drivetrain. It is now possible to modify the stock tank to 8 gallons (rideonadv.com), and the aftermarket can address any other minor issues that may arise. I am nearly sold on the Ténéré for my trip up Africa; okay, maybe after one more test ride...











- The Clearwater LED lights tuck just below the factory headlamps and provide improved safety during the day and impressive output at night. The mount is robust, which nearly eliminates light bounce and looks right at home on the front of the Ténéré.
- The instrument panel provides a wide range of information, including suspension settings, fuel capacity and range, heated grip level, and ambient temperature. Controls are located primarily on the left grip cluster, and the buttons to the left of the panel allow changes to engine mapping and traction control.
- With the low ground clearance of the Ténéré, a heavy-duty skid plate is a mandatory accessory.
- Jesse Luggage panniers, which are built from thick aluminum and mounted to a robust steel framework, are the "Rubicon-rated" adventure luggage solution.
- 5. The ES model includes a fully adjustable electronic suspension, with settings activated by controls on the handlebar. Rear preload can be programmed from a solo rider all the way to two riders and luggage. Valving can be adjusted from soft to hard, providing increased control on both street and trail.

#### RESOURCES

Yamaha Motorsports: yamahamotorsports.com, 800-962-7926 RideOnAdv: rideonadv.com, 817-831-9700

World of Adventure: theworldofadventure.com, 702-209-8503



# Sena 20S Bluetooth Headset and Prism Action Camera \$300/\$549 (single/dual) / \$399

As electronics continue to aggregate, Sena leads the field by pairing the helmet communicator with an HD action camera.





The 20S headset is smaller than most communicators, yet is still full-featured with several operation control buttons and a multifunction wheel. The small antenna boosts range, and the unit can be easily removed for charging or mounting to another helmet bracket. The Prism camera exceeded my expectations, capturing stunning 1080 FHD video on my trip to Baja. It should come in handy on future adventures, perhaps even mounted to a vehicle or a tripod.

e have all had those "Aha!" moments when we finally try a product after years of resistance. This happened to me recently with Bluetooth helmet communicators, something I've always viewed as a product couples use while lounging on their Gold Wing. I now consider them to be essential gear when riding adventure motorcycles. The moment of clarification came in Colombia, when Sinuhe Xavier mounted a Sena SMH10 to my Arai helmet and we rolled into Bogotá traffic. While we mostly used the communicators to make fun of our riding partners, they were indispensible for safe passing, calling out turns, stopping for photographs, and sharing insights on the stunning scenery. Immediately upon my return from South America, I started researching available units, which led me to Sena's 20S headset and Prism Bluetooth Action HD video camera.

#### Sena 20S Bluetooth Headset

The 20S installs semi-permanently to the helmet, a base bracket either clamping to, or sticking to the side of the chin bar. Two high-performance speakers are mounted to the ear cup voids, and a flexible microphone runs below the face shield and into position just in front of the mouth. The installation is universal, works on most helmets, and comes with various brackets and adapters. Once installed, the unit needs to be charged for a few hours via a standard micro USB 2.0 cable. During that time I read the extensive manual and downloaded the Sena Utility app to my iPhone. The app includes a quick reference guide and shows the status of multiple systems, including who is tethered to your headset. The pairing process with other Sena units is simple, but can be frustrating if you do not have the reference guide handy. Once the units are connected everything works seamlessly. In mixed terrain the signal strength is about half a mile, and in open areas it was upward of a mile. The audio quality is impressive, and I particularly like that the channel is open, so the conversation is two-way and more natural (i.e. no pauses, etcetera). I am sold on these communicators and will no longer travel in groups without them, even if that means I can hear my buddies' laughter through the speakers when I fall.

#### Sena Prism Bluetooth Action Camera

The Prism HD helmet camera is a 1080 FHD stand-alone unit that pairs with the 20S headset. Though HD action cams are certainly not new, this SENA unit has several compelling benefits and is now the only helmet-mounted video camera I use. Most importantly, the camera connects via Bluetooth to the headset, allowing for voice control and start/stop with the jog dial. While the Prism is rolling, I can narrate the action through the headset in real time, as can anyone else paired to the system—with all of the jokes and thoughts of the moment included. Video quality is excellent, and the system comes complete with a box of accessories: helmet brackets, handlebar mounts, a waterproof housing, hard mounts, and more. Oftentimes, technology can be a distraction from the creation of travel memories, but in the case of the 20S and Prism, it helps us better experience the moment with those we are riding with and record those adventures forever. sena.com, 866-887-7362