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Cagiva Gran

Dual-Sport-Touring, Italian Style

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1st Impression 2001 Suzuki Bandit 1200S



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Dual-Sport-Touring, Italian Style...



by Dave Searle

BIG-BORE DUAL-SPORTS make terrific sport-tourers in our book. Witness the success of the BMW GS, which can be found both terrorizing the twisties like a sportbike and circling the globe like a mechanical elephant. Where BMW used to have this class to itself, Triumph has now come on strong in the U.S. market with its Tigers, which were revised just last year.

Of course, the whole, hulking dirtbike, Paris-Dakar thing has been a rave in Europe for a decade now, and so it's not altogether surprising that we Americans have finally gotten a chance at another model the Europeans have been buying for years: Cagiva's Gran Canyon (a friendly local name to us Yanks, but without the "d"—no copyright infringement on the big hole in Arizona).

Cagiva, without its flagship Ducati brand (finally sold lock, stock and barrel to the American Texas-Pacific Group), is now a small player in the U.S. market, having recently set up shop to distribute both its Cagiva and MV Agusta lines. Worries about parts availability, particularly on a cross-country machine (the MV Agustas will likely only leave the comfort of their owners' living rooms on weekends), are legitimate concerns. But we are assured by Matt Stutzman, our Cagiva press rep, that the company has taken pains to fully stock parts in advance of the actual machines arriving on our shores, and expects to keep them available for at least five years.

Cagiva Gran Canyon

ENGINE

Apart from the chassis, the Gran Canyon uses the familiar 904cc desmo Ducati motor that's been around since the Paso model of 1990. Fuel injected by Weber, it has automatic cold starting control for fiddle-free fire-ups, and runs cleanly with no noticeable flat spots. And, like all Ducati motors, the short-stroke desmo engine has an eager and willing personality that rewards enthusiastic riding, and thrills the rider with its supersport exhaust note.

To match its dual-sport role, the engine tune is similar to the early Monster 900 engines, with smaller valves and ports (by way of 750cc-type cylinder heads) providing higher port velocities that produce strong torque across a wide rpm band. The dyno recorded peaks of 61.5 hp and 50.9 lb. ft. of torque—adequate, although the Gran Canyon's big-bore competition is considerably stronger. The latest BMW1150GS makes 75.0 hp and 69.9 lb. ft. of torque and the 900 Triumph Tiger (actually 885cc) lays down 71.0 hp and 48.9 lb. ft. of torque.

Although the BMW wins on power alone, it's also by far the heaviest; 581 lbs. to the Cagiva's lightest 517, and the Tiger splits the difference at 547 lbs. wet.

Over the road, the Cagiva is actually quickest to 60 mph (4.07 sec. vs. 4.11 for the GS and 4.34 for the Tiger). Top speeds are similarly close. The Tiger, with its

lower windshield, responds more to a rider's tuck and manages an even 120 mph, with the Cagiva at 118.7 and the GS at 117. Despite its power deficit on paper, the Cagiva is a genuine contender.

The Ducati motor makes the Gran Canyon feel like the sportbike of the group. The Tiger, on the other hand, makes linear power, but lacks character. The BMW feels all torque, and has excellent passing power, but a droning exhaust note (and, although improved, it still suffers from a bit of surging at steady throttle that the others don't).

TRANSMISSION

All three of these machines feature six-speed transmissions, and the Cagiva's is excellent—as good as the Triumph's. The GS, even though it's been improved in its latest incarnation, is still a step behind the other two, with more shift effort required and elusive neutrals.

The driveline on the Cagiva includes one of Ducati's typical dry clutch arrangements which absolutely hates dragstrip testing, although it works fine in virtually any other setting. Because the clutch cover is not ventilated, it's not so noisy or prone to dirt entry in dual-sport environments, but also overheats more easily as a result.

SUSPENSION

A key factor in the versatility of a dual-sport is suspension that can cope with less-than-perfect roads. Machines like dedicated sport bikes can be great fun on track-smooth twisties, but there are lots of delight-ful roads with surfaces too broken or dirty to accommodate their stiff springs and firm damping.

If you really want to explore the land, the Gran Canyon's combination of long travel suspenders and grippy block-pattern Pirellis will allow you to go where you please. And, even when the road is made for a sportbike, you won't wish you were riding something else. The Gran Canyon's agile handling and smooth power delivery will have you in a rhythm with the road that's just as satisfying, and we daresay a lot more comfortable.

Marzocchi supplies the forks—big 45mm units with anodized, extruded sliders and cast axle ends that are very attractive. Adjustable for both preload and rebound damping at both ends, we found the suspension setup just about perfect as delivered. Even without further adjustment and with two big guys on board, the rear suspension refuses to bottom and still allows the pilot to enjoy the handling. Passenger accommodations are very good, with a broad, flat comfy seat and a comfortable seat-to-pegs relationship. The rear trunk, although it has no backrest, gives the passenger an additional

measure of security against unwanted departures, as well.

Compared to the BMW and Triumph, we rate the Cagiva's handling in a tie with the heavier GS. Because the BMW Tele-lever suspension resists brake dive, it hides the Beemer's weight to an astonishing degree, but the Triumph's extra-long travel (9.06" and 7.07" front and rear) cause it to change attitude excessively under braking, which hurts its ability to charge into corners with the same ease as the Cagiva.

BRAKES

Powerful triple-disc brakes are fitted to every member of this trio. The Gran Canyon's are from Nissin and appear to be the same as those you'd find on many Hondas: twin-piston, single-action units. They have good feel and smooth, predictable stopping power, but were unable to produce the stopping distances we hoped for. Blame it on the block-pattern tires and a very hot testing day in the desert with 90°+ temperatures, which made the rubber greasy after the first hard stop. In spite of that problem, the Gran Canyon stopping distances were an exact tie for the Tiger's at 129.6", gaining a tiny 6" advantage over the GS—a virtual tie. However, the GS is alone in providing ABS as standard, and it's not an option on the other two.

In terms of everyday performance, we give the nod to the Cagiva's brakes, for overall balance; a combination of machine weight, suspension tuning, brake feel and balanced power front-to-back. The GS has good power but lacks the same feel, and the Tiger's rear brake is too powerful and too easy to lock.

HANDLING

Again, the Cagiva's light weight pays dividends. Because it's lighter, it can make do with less suspension travel, which keeps it from feeling like a camel on twisty roads.

The steering geometry is well-sorted, too, giving not only excellent stability, but also a sense of agility that adds tremendously to the fun. Compared with the other two, we'd put the Cagiva in a tie with the BMW and just a fraction better than the Tiger. But they are all very good, and the GS is the most impressive because it handles so well despite its size.

STYLING

It's subjective, of course, and none of these bikes have many shapes that push predictable Pavlovian response buttons the way certain sportbikes do, but we like the Gran Canyon. Its dual headlights are nicely integrated into the shape of the tapered fairing and have both a projector-style high beam and conventional reflec-

tor-type low beam for excellent lighting. We found the detailing very attractive as well: the slotted front fender directing cooling air at the engine, the way the exhaust pipes tuck under the seat, the shape of the drilled heat shield on the forward header, the peg brackets, hardware details and the satin-black/blood-red color scheme and graphics.

We find it far more attractive than the Tiger, which lacks much detail by comparison and which has a weird jowls-like look to its gas tank. We rate it a tie with the BMW. Although the big GS is a bit outlandish, its design is very nicely detailed and well-integrated.

RIDING IMPRESSION

We all enjoyed riding the Gran Canyon, although its tall seat limits the range of riders who feel comfortable on it. Those with inseams less than 31" will find themselves on their toes at stops. But if you fit, you'll have great fun on the Cagiva. Even fitted with the optional color-matched Givi luggage (\$949.95), the machine is still not too wide and has superior aerodynamics to the others in this group. However, with its lighter weight, it is perhaps more susceptible to sidewinds. The Gran Canyon's windshield is high enough for the windblast to clear the rider's chest and, because it's slotted at its base, it doesn't create annoying turbulence. The Tiger's windshield is pretty good, but could be taller for most of us, and the GS', although improved, is still narrow and further away from the rider, so it generates more turbulence than the others.

As a package, the Gran Canyon's delightful engine and transmission, excellent brakes, balanced handling, slim luggage and long-haul comfort rate very highly. We rate its riding impression the equal of the GS, and just a tad higher than the Tiger.

INSTRUMENTS AND CONTROLS

The Cagiva has good, useful mirrors—*Hooray!* (We don't get to say that very often.) And, the instruments are very attractive, but we would have preferred a fuel gauge to the sidestand warning light—or to have both. The handlebars are a comfortable bend and feature reach-adjustable levers, and the footpegs have rubber rests. Even the shifter has a folding tip.

The rider's seat is well-shaped and allows some fore-aft variation on a long ride. It feels a little wide in front when stopped, but offers extra thigh support when moving—a good trade.

Our only serious gripe is that the trip-meter reads in kilometers and the speedo is marked legibly only in kms, relegating the mile markings to tiny, red-on-black

numbers that are almost impossible to read. It's easier to do mental km-to-mile conversions.

The Gran Canyon has a 5.3 gal. fuel capacity, but this is a gallon short of the Triumph and BMW. Its gas mileage is significantly less than the Tiger's (37.2 mpg average vs. 46.3 mpg), but virtually the same as the GS' (36.6 mpg).

VALUE

With its excellent performance and features, the most surprising fact is that the Gran Canyon is the bargain in this bunch. Priced at just \$8995 (\$9944.95 with the three-piece hard luggage) it's \$1400 cheaper than the Tiger (\$10,395), and \$4555 cheaper than the BMW1150GS (\$13,550). It's actually closer in price to BMW's single-cylinder F650GS (\$8200), and a lot more bike for the money.

However, prospective owners should know that this will be the last year the Gran Canyon is available in the U.S., because the Ducati engines will no longer be supplied since the two companies have split up. And those who might decide to wait for the Gran Canyon's successor, the Suzuki TL1000S-powered Navigator which has been shown in Europe, should know that no agreement for Suzuki-powered bikes to be sold in the U.S. has been reached between Cagiva and U.S. Suzuki. Just as Laverda's SV650-powered Lynx was not allowed in the U.S., we may never see the Cagiva Navigator over here.

If you want an exclusive, thoroughbred Italian dual-sport, get your hands on one of the 350–400 Gran Canyons imported to the U.S. before they're all gone. You may have to pay higher parts prices and deal with a tiny dealer network (only 32 strong at this time, although any Ducati dealer could provide parts for the motor) in exchange for that exclusivity. But, until Cagiva can expand its U.S. product line, rather than shrink it, its products will remain exclusive. 🍀





The slogan is corny, but the graphics are good. The decals are not clear-coated, making inadvertent damage—or in this case, removal—easier.



Twin fillers allow the fuel nozzle deep into the tank, but take extra time to unlock. A small diameter crossover tube allows them to drain evenly, however. Instruments are easy to read except for the red mph markings around the kph speedo. Both left and right turn signal indicators flash together. Satin black paint looks military, which is cool, and prevents annoying reflections.



Left: The seat is tall, but very comfortable, allowing the rider to move back and forth a bit. The passenger portion is also excellent; wide and soft, and the passenger pegs are a comfy stretch from the seat.

The Gran Canyon's styling drew mostly positive reviews from the testers. Its fairing gives good protection for the rider with minimal buffeting. The left headlight is a projector beam-type high beam.



The color-matched Nonfango luggage is attractive and holds a lot without being too bulky, but its separate keys are a bother. The twin silencers tuck tight under the seat, minimizing overall width.

Ducati supplies the air/oil-cooled, 904cc desmo 90° V-twin, which makes exquisite Italian music and runs very smoothly. The six-speed transmission shifts beautifully, too.



The brakes are excellent Nissin twin-piston, single-action types, like those that came on the CBR600F3. They have good power and feel, but the block-pattern tires tend to limit stopping distances.

TESTERS' LOG

At first, the Gran Canyon looked weird to me, but its lines grow on you. The seat is good for a 400-mile day without discomfort, although the height requires 31" inseams to stand flat-footed. The bike's weight disappears once you're under way and the handlebars offer plenty of leverage, making the bike far more flickable than the GS1150. Although the mini fairing is very functional, offering adequate wind protection, the bike's height and saddlebags make it vulnerable to wind gusts. The Cagiva is capable on any road, but excels on broken tarmac and in tight twisties, and is, by far, the most comfortable bike ever to house the venerable Desmo 900cc motor.

—LT Snyder

I'm a fan of dual-sport motorcycles and their versatility. The Cagiva is comfortable, smooth and torquey and its suspension and brakes give the feel of a refined package. Styling-wise, the design, even with saddlebags and trunk, is very balanced and modern, another hit from my compatriot, Miguel Angel Galluzi. However, Cagiva needs to establish a presence in the U.S. mar-

ket. Apparently, if you don't have a tent in the manufacturers area during WSB Weekend, you're not in the market—and Cagiva did not have a display at Laguna Seca this year.

—Hector Cademartori

The Gran Canyon makes the perfect urban assault vehicle. Plus, with its hard bags in place, two-up weekend road trips are not a problem.

Someone described the experience of riding a Gran Canyon like skiing in deep powder—sit back and go “swoosh”—and that's pretty accurate. On the other hand, it's not a bike that really moved me, notwithstanding the corny “Powerful Emotions” plastered on the side panels (where's the razorblade?). Without a great artistic design that draws you into the bike, what's the point? Nice try Cagiva, but give me more of that exotic-erotic design that Milan is famous for and rename it the “Stallion.” You should know by now that sex sells.

—Don Searle

2000 Cagiva GC900 Gran Canyon

SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DATA



ENGINE

Type:air/oil-cooled, V-twin
 Valvetrain:desmo, 2 valves per cyl.,
 adjusting shims over/under valves
 Size:904cc
 Bore/stroke:92.0mm x 68.0mm
 Comp. ratio:9.2:1
 Injection:Weber electronic
 I.A.W.16M, throttle-body type
 Exhaust:2-1-2

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission:6-speed
 Final drive:No. 532? O-ring chain,
 3.00:1 final ratio, 15/45 gearing

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:60.24"
 Rake/trail:28°/3.62"
 Ground clearance:6.63"
 Seat height:33.0"
 GVWR:956 lbs.
 Wet weight:517 lbs.
 Carrying capacity:439 lbs.

SUSPENSION

Front: ..45mm Marzocchi leading axle
 forks, adj. preload and reb. damping,
 6.69" travel
 Rear: Progressive linkage-type, single
 shock, with adj. preload and reb.
 damping, 6.69" travel

BRAKES

Front: dual 296mm discs, two-piston,
 single-action Nissin calipers
 Rear:240mm disc, twin-piston,
 single-action Nissin caliper

TIRES & WHEELS

Front:100/90-19 Pirelli MT80RS
 on 2.15" x 19" spoked wheel
 Rear:150/70-17 Pirelli MT80RS
 on 4.25" x 17" spoked wheel

ELECTRICS

Battery:12V, 18AH
 Ignition:digital-mapped electronic
 Headlight:55/55W

FUEL

Tank capacity:5.3 gal.
 High/low/avg. mpg: ..39.8/33.66/37.2



PERFORMANCE

Measured top speed118.7 mph
 0-1/4 mile12.53 sec.
 @ 101.95 mph
 0-60 mph4.07 sec.
 0-100 mphn/a sec.
 60-0 mph129.6'
 Power to Weight Ratio1:8.41

AS MEASURED BY THE MCN STALKER RADAR SYSTEM

M/C RATING SYSTEM

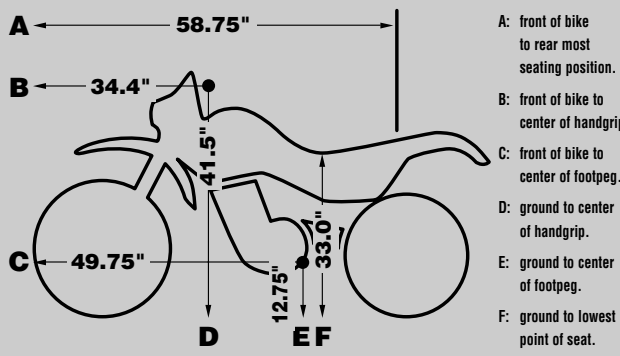


Open Dual-Sport

Engine	●●●○
Transmission	●●●○
Suspension	●●●○
Brakes	●●●○
Handling	●●●○
Styling	●●●○
Riding Impression	●●●○
Instruments/Controls	●●●○
Attention to Detail	●●●○
Value	●●●○

OVERALL RATING ●●●○

ERGONOMICS TEMPLATE



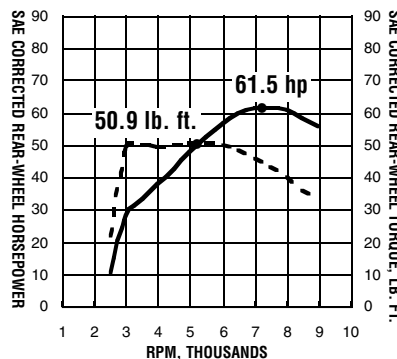
MISCELLANEOUS

Instruments:speedo, tach,
 odometer, tripmeter.
 Indicators:hi-beam, t/s, neutral,
 oil pressure, low fuel, sidestand, clock
 MSRP:\$8995
 \$9944.95 as tested, with matching
 three-piece luggage
 Valve adj. interval:6000 mi.
 Warranty:24 mo., unlimited miles
 Colors:Matt black/Red,
 Red/Silver

DYNAMOMETER DATA

Low end ●●●○
 Mid-range ●●●○
 Top end ●●●○

The Gran Canyon's fuel injection needs no choke, making starting simple. Its 904cc V-twin Ducati powerplant is smooth and responsive and sounds great. Fitted with the smaller-valved 750cc heads, it delivers a very useable torque curve.



TEST NOTES

PICKS

- Very comfortable with good wind protection
- Stylish optional luggage makes it a great sport-tourer
- Excellent passenger accommodations

PANS

- Too tall for the vertically challenged
- Mph markings hard to read on the speedo
- Decals are not clear-coated, won't last long

STANDARD MAINTENANCE

Item	Time	Parts	Labor
Oil & Filter	0.5	\$12.95 + \$15	\$27.00
Air Filter	1.0	\$17.00	\$54.00
Valve Adjust	2.0		\$108.00
Battery Access	0.2	MF	\$10.80
Final Drive	0.2		\$10.80
R/R Rear Whl.	0.4		\$21.60
Change Plugs	0.1	\$6.40	\$5.40
Adjust carbs	0.3		\$16.20
Totals	4.7	\$51.35	\$253.80