



POSTSCRIPT: BENELLI AMAZONAS TRE-K

After our trip to Country Trax my friends and offroad riding instructors Judy Veith and Mark Hardy expressed an interest in riding the Benelli Amazonas, which Mike Puzey readily agreed to, as he was keen to hear a lady rider's evaluation of his bike. Although Judy was originally drawn to the Benelli by its unique styling, she and Mark tested it comprehensively during a dirt and tar road trip from Germiston down to Denysville's Midvaal Motor Cycle Museum, using their experience to assess its performance and suggest improvements for African conditions. A third opinion came from BMW HP2 rider Harald Penzhorn, who really wanted to experience a triple, after years of riding flat twins.

Their first observation was how stable the Amazonas felt on dirt, which they attributed to a relatively low centre of gravity, courtesy of its hefty engine. Mark had expected a relatively peaky

power delivery, but he and Judy liked its low to mid range torqueyness, which made for easy riding and good engine braking. The brakes themselves were rated as stunningly good, while Mark also commented on receiving good road surface feedback from both wheels, despite the need for more suspension travel at both ends. They both felt comfortable on the Benelli, with only my king sized friend Harald feeling a bit cramped.

Top of their list of suggested improvements is a 21 inch front wheel and at least 40mm more front suspension travel, combined with a significantly softer rear monoshock spring.

Higher, wider handlebars, toothed off-road foot pegs, a higher front screen, a larger fuel tank, a redesigned number plate/rear mudguard assembly and a far more substantial, metal sump guard

were also recommended, while Judy would like to see luggage mountings that would accept hard or soft panniers. The indicators need to be repositioned, the front mudguard raised a few centimeters to accommodate knobblies and the petrol tanks stylish rear ridges reshaped to allow riders knees to be tucked in there when riding standing up, all without spoiling its unique looks, - a tallish order but one which Mike Puzey is well up to, given his extensive design experience and aeronautical engineering background. He's also a GS1200 rider, which gives him a useful perspective on the bike that everyone wants to beat.

The really good news here is that Benelli have actually commissioned Mike to modify the Amazonas for African conditions and will pay him to make the necessary components, which is a world first to my knowledge and a real feather in his cap. The bike the we rode will be used as his development mule, so don't be surprised if you see it around Gauteng in modified form, over the next few months.

Mark, Judy and Harald were all impressed by the Amazonas, to the extent that Mark said that he would even buy one in its current configuration for commuting and tarmac touring, while Judy was even more besotted with its looks after the test than before! Harald wouldn't swap his HP2 for one, but was seriously impressed by its performance nevertheless, so there's no doubt that the Benelli Amazonas has lots of potential to join the ranks of the adventure bikes that can successfully handle what Mama Africa can dish out.

Over to you Mike, let's see what you can come up with...
www.puzey.co.za

