

THE BIKE TYRE TEST AT A GLANCE



Sports touring tyres pushed to their limits at Bruntingthorpe



AVON STORM ST

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.25kg/6.75kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 46°C/75°C
Best lap time 1:15:42 (joint 5th)
Average price per pair £180

What are they? Replaced the Azaro ST as Avon's premium sports touring rubber in 2007, the Storm is a single-compound tyre that uses variable density metal belts. Avon say this negates the need for different compounds across the tyre.

Tester says These feel more like sports tyres than touring tyres. The bike's very agile; on the large radius corners you get a surprising rate of turn – the hallmark of a good sports tyre. There were no stability issues. Under acceleration and at high speed there was no weaving, even hitting the joins and breaks in the track didn't upset the bike – full marks. They do everything the OEM tyres do (BT-020s) and take it even further.

Rating ****
Contact www.avonmotorcycle.com



BRIDGESTONE BT-021

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.50kg/6.75kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 47°C/71°C
Best lap time 1:15:42 (joint 5th)
Average price per pair £170

What are they? The outgoing BT-020 had been Bridgestone's best selling tyre for six years, giving the 021 a hard act to follow. Bridgestone have approved the 021 for use on sportsbikes as well as sports tourers – suggesting they have high hopes for their new tyre.

Tester says Similar to the Avons; there's a 110mph corner exit onto the straight where the Bridgestones feel really stable, very composed – and that's one of the hardest tests on a tyre. There's no weaving on the overbanding, it turns-in nicely and tracks well. It enhances the bike's handling in every way. A good replacement tyre, offering excellent sports potential and a competitive price.

Rating ****
Contact www.bridgestone.co.uk



CONTINENTAL CONTIROAD ATTACK

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.75kg/6.70kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 48.5°C/76.8°C
Best lap time 1:16:03 (8th)
Average price per pair £180

What are they? Continental introduced the ContiRoad Attack in 2004. The most distinctive feature is the swoopy tread pattern featured across the range. In 2006, Continental revised the front's tread pattern to improve life on this single-compound tyre.

Tester says Stable in a straight line and composed under acceleration, but when we started riding hard, going into corners on the brakes, the front was running wide. It felt like the sidewall was flexing. It's fine up to, say, 80% of your riding ability, but when you push beyond that, the tyres are working against you. More effort was needed to get it to turn too, compared with the Avons and Bridgestones. The lowest scoring tyre but still fine for normal riding.

Rating ***
Contact www.cambriantyres.co.uk



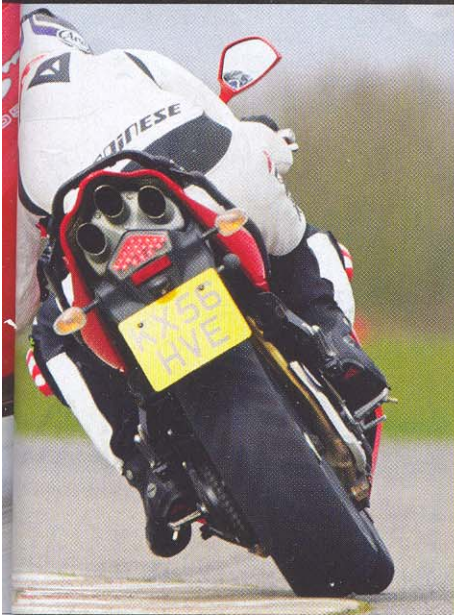
METZELER ROADTEC Z6

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.75kg/6.50kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 40°C/75°C
Best lap time 1:14:01 (3rd)
Average price per pair £190

What are they? Metzeler's sports touring tyre uses a single compound rubber which they say is optimised for both giant trailies and sports tourers, with special emphasis on long life.

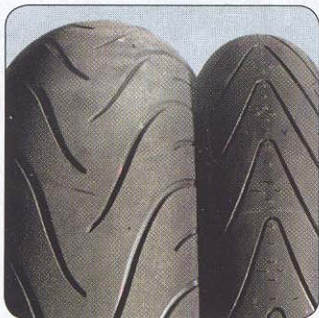
Tester says They're the best so far. The bike was stable, just like the other tyres, but unlike the Continentals, when you start pushing the bike everything holds together. There's grip, feel and confidence further than the other tyres can offer. Road riders can and will use this extra ability; you could take these tyres on the occasional trackday, too. The Metzeler's shine through when you're in a challenging corner; they turn-in and offer a quicker rate of turn than the Avons, Bridgestones and Continentals.

Rating ****
Contact www.metzelmoto.co.uk



EIGHT TYRES, TWO CLEAR WINNERS

Dunlop's new, tech-heavy Roadsmart and Pirelli's simple but effective Strada clawed their way to the top of the pile using very different technology. We ranked them equal first, though a clear winner could emerge with the passing of thousands more miles (we'll be assessing tyre life on our long-term fleet). Honourable mention goes to the Maxxis SuperMaxx - a brand-new tyre that's competitive and well priced. Continental's ContiRoad Attack brought up the rear - though by no means a bad tyre, the game has moved on in the past three years and it's been left behind somewhat.



MICHELIN PILOT ROAD 2CT

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.60kg/6.50kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 40°C/68°C
Best lap time: 1:14:79 (4th)
Average price per pair: £190

What are they? Introduced to critical acclaim in 2006, Michelin's sports touring tyre features a twin-compound rear. In a test of rival sports touring tyres by French research house CERM, 2CTs had the best wet grip and best longevity.

Tester says Fantastic. In all the areas we're considering - stability, confidence, feel and handling - they're really good. They were stable on all parts of the track and all surfaces. The steering was lighter than other sets which seemed to enhance 'feel' and give the rider better feedback. They let you turn in fast and maintain a good rate of direction change. A very good replacement tyre offering sporting potential, with user-friendly characteristics.

Rating *****
Contact www.michelin.co.uk



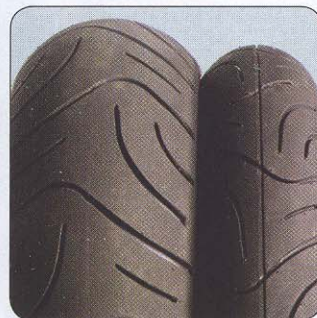
PIRELLI DIABLO STRADA

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.25kg/6.85kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 40°C/68°C
Best lap time: 1:13:53 (2nd)
Average price per pair: £180

What are they? Introduced in 2005, two years after Pirelli's Diablo sports tyre, the Strada could be mistaken for its sportier sibling. The single compound tyre places equal emphasis on grip and mileage and utilises a very stiff carcass to reduce flex.

Tester says They feel like dedicated sportsbike tyres. They're easily capable of being better than the bike will allow. There's loads of grip, you can flick it into turns, it's accurate and you can turn tighter than you think possible. In every area - on the brakes, midcorner stability, under acceleration and flat out - they perform perfectly. You can ride much harder, if you choose to, than any of the other tyres allow. Outstanding sporting potential.

Rating *****
Contact: www.pirelli.co.uk



MAXXIS SUPERMAXX M6029

Weights
Fr/Rear: 5kg/6.75kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 49°C/74°C
Best lap time: 1:15:57 (7th)
Average price per pair: £130

What are they? Not to be confused with the old sports tyres (now Supermaxx Sports), these single compound tyres are by far the cheapest on test.

Tester says My perception of Maxxis was fourth division - but the lap time is Premiership. They're on a par with the Avons. Slightly heavier on the steering, but stability is better than most of the others. And, at £50-£60 cheaper than all the other tyres, they are the budget option - but the performance is close to the other brands. The Supermaxx have a very shallow, rounded profile, the most extreme in the test, which makes them slower to turn-in but what you lose in agility you gain in stability - they're one of the most secure-feeling on test.

Rating ****
Contact www.maxxis.co.uk



DUNLOP ROADSMART 3TC

Weights
Fr/Rear: 4.5kg/7kg
Temperature after riding
Fr/Rear: 48°C/74°C
Best lap time: 1:13:45 (1st)
Average price per pair: £180

What are they? These twin-compound tyres in the test are at the forefront of Dunlop's recent range simplification and reinvention.

Tester says Similar in feel to Dunlop's sportier tyres, but with no obvious trade-off. Straight line stability is good and under acceleration and over the tarmac joins in the runway, they're fine. At the end of the runway, braking and turning-in at 165mph feels remarkably stress-free - everything is very controlled. The Dunlops are on a par with the Pirellis - both feel very sporty and suit the bike very well. Only time will tell how they stack up after a few thousand miles, but the Roadsmart's dual compound could give Dunlop an advantage.

Rating *****
Contact www.dunloptyres.co.uk