

Suzuki Hayabusa GSX-1300R

It hurts me to say it about this iconic weapon, but the big 'Busa is never going to win any prizes for its looks going by today's standards; it would certainly look much more at home parked up in a Weight Watchers meeting than at a Miss Miami beauty pageant. You can see that every detail, from the indicators to the mudguard, have been designed with aerodynamics in mind, with, unfortunately, the result being something that resembles a fat bird whose belt and bra are too tight – there are bits bulging out everywhere.

Sat astride the big Suzuki, you're instantly reminded of its length, the stretched out feeling being a typical trait of the GSX-R family. The low seat lulls you into a false sense of comfort, right up until the point you reach for the also low, rear angled 'bars and grasp the true nature of this sheep in sportbike's clothing. And if that stretched and low stance isn't enough to put you off, the archaic analogue clock setup is enough to make you question how a bike with a '17 plate could sport such a prehistoric setup. Fired up, the 'Busa ticked over sweetly, revved cleanly and despite all of its 266kg, foot-powered shunting was a doddle thanks to its low weight and generous steering lock. Great news if you plan on living out your days doing

U-turns on single track back lanes, while wearing a high-vis vest and pointing fake speeds guns at kids on bicycles.

But for me there was so much more appeal to this bike than its mild mannered manoeuvrability, and it didn't take long to get a proper grasp of its raw brilliance. Riding through town at a sedate pace, the placid and friendly motor was accompanied by fuelling smoother than a silkworm's poo, but on opening the taps it pulled stronger than John Travolta at a Grease reunion. From low down the Busa drove with a ferocity that you wouldn't expect it able to maintain all the way through its rev range, but it did just that.

Better still, unlike so many Euro 4 bikes (this is still Euro 3) there was no harsh backlash to be abused by when rolling off the throttle. There aren't many motors that lend themselves so well to being ridden as calmly or as crazily as the 'Busa lump, which I quickly figured was its USP. What felt less endearing was the clunky gearbox that felt lumpier than school dinner custard, made all the more deplorable with its lack of a blipper or shifter. Arguably, that hang-up's the kind of thing you'd get used to with road miles, but no matter how far I beasted this bullet there was no getting used to the lack of wind protection from the fairly low screen, which



Old, fat, incompetent...
that's our Boothy.

had me flopping around like a pissed-up windsock. That was something you don't expect from a bike of this nature, being so big and bulbous.

I mean, sure, the screen is big enough to cower behind if needs be, but if you wanted to sit at 130mph on an autobahn for mile after mile you might want to have a rethink. Having said that, all that buffeting does have its advantages when it comes to slowing you down, as the standard brakes are about as capable as Pretty Boy in a novice group trackday. They really aren't impressive. Hauling up

266kg of Suzuki takes some effort. It wasn't long before the 'Busa's brakes were really struggling to cope, fading progressively with heat stroke from heavy handed anchorage.

They weren't particularly strong to start with but the more abuse I threw their way the more they protested, and the closer to the 'bar the lever came. Not the most confidence-inspiring of traits on a bike that's capable of nearly 200mph, and quite the embuggerance when you're trying to keep up with Dangerous Bruce on his home turf.

2017 SUZUKI HAYABUSA GSX-1300R £11,599

Highlights

Monstrous motor
Armchair on wheels
Cult following
155Nm of torque
166kg dry
194bhp

	BRAKING	4
	Started weak, got weaker	
	STABILITY	5
	Shaken and stirred	
	AGILITY	7
	Assistance required	
	PERFORMANCE	9
	Just keeps on going	
	FUN	7
	Oh yes!	



And if inspiration of confidence is your thing then the Suzuki's cornering capabilities leave a fair bit to be desired. Our route took us through some fast stuff and some really slow stuff. In the tighter bends, getting the bike to turn wasn't a problem, it actually felt fairly agile in that respect, but mid-corner the whole bike felt vague and nervous. Out on the faster roads, the bike tracked round the bends fine as long as the surface was flat and you weren't accelerating too hard; throw in some bumps or a load of gas, though, and the 'Busa would buck and weave itself into a big old knot – the

soft setup might be great for comfort but it did nothing to help the bike corner.

Where the 'Busa shone was on the big straight roads, with no sharp bends necessitating heavy braking or strong lean angles. And it really did shine. There is something delightfully refreshing about a bike relieved of electronic intervention. Every junction exit encouraged unprovoked power wheelies, and on more than one occasion the lack of traction control meant I could slide the rear end through big handfuls of throttle – much to Bruce's horror (because he doesn't know how to do it). Like

the earliest of aircraft, the Suzuki made you feel you were flying by the seat of your pants, without every other turn of the throttle being severed by a computer that thinks it knows best (just like the misses). Okay, so it's no Gixer in the corners, but as far as the sheer riding experience goes the 'Busa is still a pretty special bike. Better still, it's rife for fettling and making your own. Our test bike had Yoshi cans, which only just scratches the surface of bolt-ons that would make this bike both brilliant and unique. And it costs thousands less than the Kwacker, so you could afford a few extra shiny bits.

BRUCE IN BRIEF



I've always liked 'Busas, mostly due their bad boy, balls-out persona, but also because they cut the crap and deliver you a simple, powerful motorcycle. Admittedly, they're about as tech-savvy as a rock, but there's a certain charm to these chariots of old that were designed with top-end speed at heart.

Arguably, the Hayabusa has been a bit of a willy waver for Suzuki, tasked with being the fastest, baddest and comfiest sportbike on the market. And for many years it's held off attacks from Honda's Blackbirds, Kawasaki's ZZRs and even the BMW brigade with their bahn blasting K1300S. But riding this used example of the 'Busa breed around Lincolnshire's finest back roads highlighted just how aged the bike's become; from its cumbersome feel to its dated looks and attitude. I'd argue you could do a lot to a 'Busa to make it a bit more razzmatazz, but no volume of tinkering could ever make it as technologically sophisticated or effortless to ride as its new nemesis, the H2 SX.

While comfort and power delivery from its silky smooth motor proved impossible to contest, the general handling was sloppy and required a lot of rider input to get the bike turning. In my opinion, it's still a great bike, but a model that's run its time and desperately needs replacing by the expected all-new Hayabusa. Chop-chop!

Boothy reckons he's ridden bigger birds.



Verdict 8/10

A strong motor and loads of character go some way to making up for the 'Busa's soft suspension and nervous disposition.

➤ LOADS OF CHARACTER, STRONG ENGINE
➤ TERRIBLE BRAKES, TOO SOFT

Smoothly does it if you want to get the best of the Hayabusa.



Bruce loves to show-off his pulling power.



WHERE THE 'BUSA SHONE WAS ON THE BIG STRAIGHT ROADS