



"It can make you feel like you're a better rider than you really are"



YAMAHA YZF1000 THUNDERACE

£4199

1996 R-reg | 21,851 miles | braided brake lines | D&K Newcastle-under-Lyme 01782 861100

HUG the tank and open the throttle. Somewhere deep inside the engine, hundreds of horses are saddled and sent charging to the rear. But in these slippery conditions they're wasted. The rear tyre loses traction... the engine screams... yet the bike remains composed. Ah yes, the Thunderace effect.

The Thunderace was once Yamaha's top-of-the-range sportsbike. It was developed from the great FZR1000 but lost the plot somewhere along the line. Where an EXUP is raw, aggressive and focused, the Thunderace is smooth, calculated and content. If it was a person it'd be happily married and cultivating a beer belly.

This isn't all bad news. It gives the Thunderace characteristics that can now only be found in Suzuki's GSX-R1000 - the ability to make you feel like you're a better rider

SPECS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Engine | 1/c cooled, 20v inline four, carbs 1002cc |
| Claimed power | 145bhp @ 10,000rpm |
| Claimed torque | 79.6ft lb @ 8500rpm |
| Chassis | aluminium Deltabox |
| Dry weight | 198kg (436lb) |
| Seat height | 790mm (30.8in) |
| Fuel capacity | 20 litres (4.40 gal) |
| Tyres | (f) 120/70 ZR17; (r) 180/55 ZR17 |

PERFORMANCE

| | |
|------------------|--------|
| Top speed | 170mph |
| Fuel consumption | 30mpg |

INSURANCE

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Norwich Union group | 16 |
|---------------------|----|

AVERAGE PRICES

CAP Green Book quotes £3875 for a standard bike with 13,000 on the clock

than you really are. Maybe that's bad news after all?

There's nothing slow about the Thunderace. In the right place it's capable of indicating well over 160mph, and the acceleration is always thrilling. In some ways it's actually better than the current R1. Where that simply feels light and over-powered, the Thunderace almost feels more powerful because you're aware of the bike's mass. It pulls relentlessly and keeps urging: 'Come on, we can go faster still!'

You don't have to rev hard to have fun, however. Thanks to the EXUP valve and the large displacement, it is just as enjoyable below 6000rpm - making it a bit more versatile than the other bikes here. The comfy seat, wide bars and relatively high screen keep you insulated from the worst of the weather and make the Ace ideal if you need a multi-role bike.

There are drawbacks though. With nearly 22,000 miles showing the suspension on our test bike had already gone soggy, giving the impression of being worse because of the weight it holds. On this particular bike the problem extends to a blown fork seal as well making cornering a test of bravery rather than skill. It was struggling to hold a line and felt very unstable.

The other typically Yamaha problem is the brakes - although the problems have changed slightly. In the past Yamaha calipers were always the first to seize come winter time, but this changed with the new one-piece design. They are awesome when new, but the ones on our bike had lost their potency. There's a strong chance this may be down to the previous owner, rather than being a generic problem.

A quick once over reveals this bike's been owned by a roundabout



Name: Dave Shepherd
Model: '96
Thunderace
Mileage: 17,500



My 1996 bike was in a bit of a state when I bought it nearly four years ago. It had been crashed and needed a new fork leg, handlebars, headlight and clocks (I repaired the clocks and you can't tell they were ever damaged). All the bodywork was knackered so I just ripped it all off and put on some Rental bars, which have made it even more comfortable, and have kept it like that ever since.

I run it with a smaller gearbox sprocket (one tooth smaller) to improve acceleration, absolute top speed is not that important to me. It only does 140, but accelerates like hell. Wheelies are quite easy if that's your bag; I can't really do them.

I've also fitted a Micron carbon can it but the only thing it improved was the noise.

Name: Roger Gillespie
Model: '99
Thunderace
Mileage: 16,000



I got the bike in August 2000, it was a 1999 model which had been registered in May 2000. It came to me with just under 2000 miles on the clock, and was as standard apart from an Ixil can.

I just couldn't resist its looks. Originally, I test rode a Blade and an R1, but to be honest the Ace struck me as a better all round bike; I loved the torque and its relative comfort.

I've added braided lines all round, wavy brake discs, sintered pads, polished the frame, fitted a YZF750 swingarm (polished as well), Öhlins rear shock, PLR Suspension modified front forks, Pyramid seat cowl, Corbin seat, 1040 JE overbore kit, stage one Dynojet kit, Pipercross air filter and a Yoshi R3 slip on.

To be honest it's the power of the

bike and the way it's delivered I really love, the overbore has only added to this – it's like riding a scooter, you just twist and go.

Name: Roy Gartside
Model: '01 Thunderace
Mileage: 6200



Weather protection is brilliant, the engine is so strong and the brakes are some of the best fitted to any road bike. If you keep to relatively legal speeds the tank range can be as much as 240+ miles which makes it a superb tourer as well as a sports contender. There's plenty of low-down torque with a mad rush at the top end. Some do burn oil. Mine uses about 250ml per 2000 miles and although Yamaha don't list it as part of the maintenance programme I'd advise any owner to strip and lube the EXUP valve every time they do an oil change. It takes about 15 mins and you can do it while the oil drains.

Top: The mileage is high, but not disastrous
Middle: The rear shock is badly corroded and has lost its damping along the way
Bottom: The silencer may look mint, but the pipes under the bellypan tell a very different story

jockey with a taste for modification. Iridium indicators, oddly worn tyres and a single scraped footpeg are all evidence. The brakes hadn't escaped either. Like the clutch they're now fed by braided lines and it's highly probable their lack of bite is down to trapped air in the system.

The mods don't stop there. Although this bike is wearing a standard end can it has some slight scuffing – the kind that's caused in a shed rather than on a bike. Overall the condition is good, unlike the pipe work in the bellypan which is heavily corroded. This suggests the silencer was put back on when the bike was sold. White instant gasket confirms it's been removed at some point.

Of course there's nothing wrong with this as such, but it does beg the question have the carbs been touched? Stereotypically, someone who modifies their bike will go for a pipe and carb kit at the same time, and that means the bike may now be running far too rich.

Problems aside, the Thunderace still represents incredible value. Time to saddle those horses.

CLOCKS

Warning light problems are highlighted by the tach. If the needle sweeps round and then sits at a certain rpm before returning to normal, one of the idiot lights is faulty.

REAR SHOCK

Starts to lose its damping as soon as 15,000 miles but you can pick up an aftermarket one from as little as £250.

HEADRACES

Notchiness in the headrace bearings is common. Lift the front off the floor (get a mate to help you) to check the bars move smoothly.



END CAN

A new end can won't create much of a power boost (due to the EXUP valve). And if you fit a full system you lose the valve completely.

ENGINE

With a claimed 145bhp on tap, this is one of the fastest engines around. They're pretty reliable and only vibrations at around 5000rpm spoil the fun.





SUSPENSION

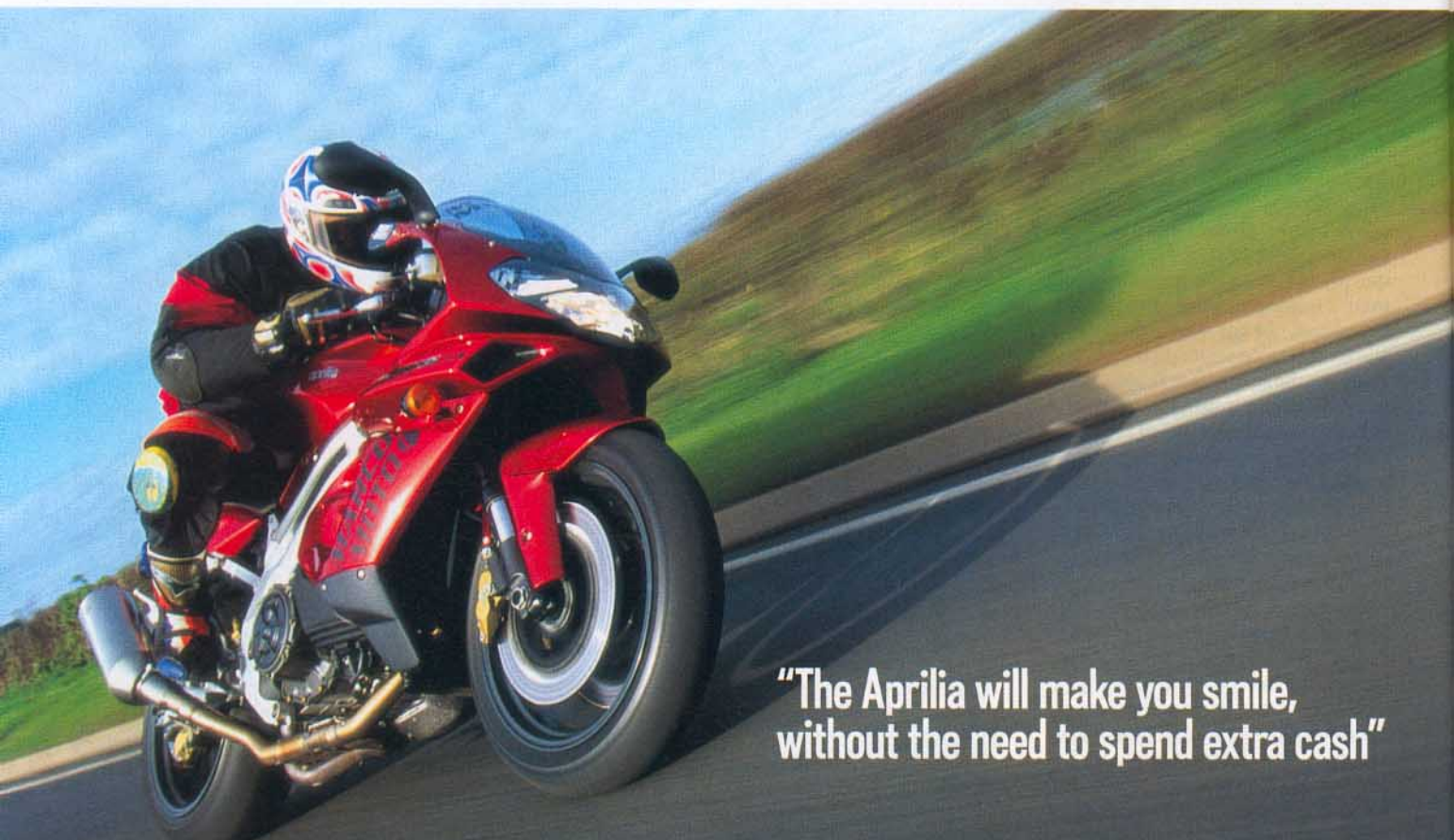
On standard settings, the Ace can feel a little soggy but if you tweak with the adjusters, you can stiffen it up (remember to write down the stock settings).

BRAKES

Very powerful, but need regular stripping and cleaning. Never remove the anodised blanking plates as this will wreck the caliper.

What do you expect from a bike?

| | | "How much is it going to set me back in running costs?" | "How will it handle touring through the south of France?" | "Am I going to be able to keep up with my mates on Sunday?" |
|-------|--|--|--|---|
| £3995 |  <p>KAWASAKI ZRX1100 1998 T-reg, 10,277 miles, carbon bellypan and Datatagged, Robinson's of Rochdale: 01706 716666</p> | <p>Servicing: every 3700 miles. Minor (£188), major (£275). Tyres last approx 4000 miles and cost £110(f), £130(r). 36mpg fuel consumption Annual running costs (6000miles), approx £1280</p> | <p>Hard luggage available <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tank bag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Throwovers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tailpack <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuel range 158 miles The bike will cope but will you? Lack of protection limits range and speed</p> | <p>Top speed 5/10 Acceleration 5/10 Steering 6/10 Suspension 7/10 Brakes 7/10 Overall 6/10 You might, but your arms will be way too long for you sleeves unless you're small enough to tuck behind the clocks</p> |
| £4199 |  <p>YAMAHA YZF1000 THUNDERACE 1996 R-reg, 21,851 miles, braided brake lines and mini-indicators, D&K, Newcastle-under-Lyme: 01782 861100</p> | <p>Servicing: minor one every 4000 miles (£130), major one every 8000miles (£230). Tyres last approx 4000miles and cost £110(f), £130(r). 30mpg fuel consumption Annual running costs (6000miles), approx £1240</p> | <p>Hard luggage available <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tank bag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Throwovers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tailpack <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuel range 132 miles It'll carry you far. The only drawbacks are chain drive and the lack of centrestand</p> | <p>Top speed 8/10 Acceleration 8/10 Steering 8/10 Suspension 7/10 Brakes 7/10 Overall 8/10 This was once Yamaha's top dog sportsbike - keeping up shouldn't be a problem and the real limiting factor is you</p> |
| £3999 |  <p>HONDA CB11000 X-11 1999 V-reg, 8682 miles, screen and panniers fitted, On Yer Bike, Aylesbury: 01296 655999</p> | <p>Servicing: minor one every 4000 miles (£120), major one every 8000miles (£220). Tyres last approx 5000miles and cost £110(f), £130(r). 28mpg fuel consumption Annual running costs (6000miles), approx £1087</p> | <p>Hard luggage available <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tank bag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Throwovers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tailpack <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuel range 134 miles Again the bike will last longer than you. Lack of protection and chain drive will wear you down</p> | <p>Top speed 7/10 Acceleration 8/10 Steering 7/10 Suspension 7/10 Brakes 8/10 Overall 8/10 You might be able to keep up, but the question is whether they want you too. "Oh, him on the X-11? No, he's not with us"</p> |
| £3900 |  <p>APRILIA SL1000 FALCO 1999 W-reg, 21,064 miles, carbon cans and Scotttoter. Private owner</p> | <p>Servicing: every 7500 miles minor (£150), major (£250). Tyres last approx 7000miles and cost £110(f), £130(r). 40mpg fuel consumption Annual running costs (6000miles), approx £917</p> | <p>Hard luggage available <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tank bag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Throwovers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tailpack <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuel range 184 miles Throwovers need standard low-level silencers and the plastic tank requires a harness-style tank bag</p> | <p>Top speed 8/10 Acceleration 8/10 Steering 9/10 Suspension 7/10 Brakes 8/10 Overall 8/10 If you can't keep up something's wrong with the bike. It's either that or you need to find some slower friends</p> |



"The Aprilia will make you smile, without the need to spend extra cash"

"What'll it be like to live with?"

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Underseat space | fridge freezer & sink |
| Mirrors | some elbow 6/10 |
| Centrestand | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Fuel gauge | needle gauge |
| Desirability to thieves | 5/10 |

"How did it do in RiDER POWER 2002?"

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Overall position | 52/122 |
| Build quality | 3/5 |
| Reliability | 4/5 |
| Rider comfort | 4/5 |
| Best tyres | Bridgestone BT020 |

"Will it fall to bits at the first sign of winter?"

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| Paint/lacquer | 9/10 | Exhaust | 8/10 |
| Fasteners | 8/10 | Engine reliability | 9/10 |
| Suspension | 8/10 | Brakes | 7/10 |
| Overall | | 8/10 | |
| Genuine spares prices | | | |
| Top fairing | n/a | Brake disc | £235 |
| Shock | £148 | Mirror | £30 |

"I take a 5ft 9in pillion, are they going to enjoy themselves?"

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Grab rail/handles | 8/10 |
| Pillion footpegs | 8/10 |
| Seat comfort | 9/10 |
| Windblast | 7/10 |
| Room | 7/10 |
| Two-up performance | 7/10 |
| Two-up handling | 6/10 |
| Overall | 7/10 |



| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Underseat space | U-lock and waterproofs |
| Mirrors | 6/10 |
| Centrestand | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Fuel gauge | warning light |
| Desirability to thieves | 7/10 |

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Overall position | 39/122 |
| Build quality | 3/5 |
| Reliability | 5/5 |
| Rider comfort | 3/5 |
| Best tyres | Bridgestone BT010 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| Paint/lacquer | 7/10 | Exhaust | 6/10 |
| Fasteners | 7/10 | Engine reliability | 9/10 |
| Suspension | 5/10 | Brakes | 7/10 |
| Overall | | 7/10 | |
| Genuine spares prices | | | |
| Top fairing | £270 | Brake disc | £158 |
| Shock | £387 | Mirror | £50 |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Grab rail/handles | 0/10 |
| Pillion footpegs | 5/10 |
| Seat comfort | 6/10 |
| Windblast | 8/10 |
| Room | 7/10 |
| Two-up performance | 8/10 |
| Two-up handling | 7/10 |
| Overall | 6/10 |



| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Underseat space | overtrousers |
| Mirrors | some elbow 6/10 |
| Centrestand | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Fuel gauge | warning light |
| Desirability to thieves | 4/10 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Overall position | n/a |
| Build quality | n/a |
| Reliability | n/ |
| Rider comfort | n/a |
| Best tyres | n/a |
| Not enough entries for statistical accuracy | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| Paint/lacquer | 8/10 | Exhaust | 8/10 |
| Fasteners | 7/10 | Engine reliability | 7/10 |
| Suspension | 8/10 | Brakes | 7/10 |
| Overall | | 8/10 | |
| Genuine spares prices | | | |
| Top fairing | n/a | Brake disc | £162 |
| Shock | £255 | Mirror | £29 |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Grab rail/handles | 8/10 |
| Pillion footpegs | 8/10 |
| Seat comfort | 8/10 |
| Windblast | 6/10 |
| Room | 8/10 |
| Two-up performance | 8/10 |
| Two-up handling | 6/10 |
| Overall | 7/10 |



| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Underseat space | overtrousers and Scottolier |
| Mirrors | a little elbow 7/10 |
| Centrestand | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Fuel gauge | warning light |
| Desirability to thieves | 6/10 |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Overall position | 42/122 |
| Build quality | 3/5 |
| Reliability | 3/5 |
| Rider comfort | 4/5 |
| Best tyres | Bridgestone BT010 or Michelin Sportec M1 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| Paint/lacquer | 9/10 | Exhaust | 8/10 |
| Fasteners | 8/10 | Engine reliability | 9/10 |
| Suspension | 8/10 | Brakes | 8/10 |
| Overall | | 9/10 | |
| Genuine spares prices | | | |
| Top fairing | £451 | Brake disc | £205 |
| Shock | £706 | Mirror | £64 |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Grab rail/handles | 9/10 |
| Pillion footpegs | 7/10 |
| Seat comfort | 8/10 |
| Windblast | 8/10 |
| Room | 7/10 |
| Two-up performance | 8/10 |
| Two-up handling | 8/10 |
| Overall | 8/10 |



VERDICT

IF YOU haven't already guessed the Aprilia takes first place. For £4000 it's the best bike here and more than capable of making you smile without the need to spend more money in the process. It doesn't matter whether your idea of fun is hooning down a local road once a week or working your way through France two-up once a month – the Aprilia will do it. And more importantly, you don't have to fret about it coping.

The only reservation we have about the Aprilia is that it's a victim of its own success. The very things that make it a great bike also make it a tall order to find secondhand. Looking through MCN there never seems to be more than three a week and you have to travel to get them. But the effort would be worth it. You're getting a lot of the know-how that makes the RSV such a good bike and there doesn't seem to be a problem with reliability either (good news because according to RiDER POWER data spares back-up can be disappointing).

Second place has to be a tie. I've argued with myself about whether the Thunderace has more smile-potential than the Kawasaki, but the simple answer is they are equal in different ways. The Thunderace makes you grin with its ability do things

quickly. It has a higher top speed and gets there faster than the other bikes – with sorted suspension and proper tyres it would also out-handle all but the Falco.

On the other hand, you don't need to spend the money on the ZRX – it would help, but it's not vital. The ZRX generates grins by being different – it's more about being fast and smooth rather than start/stop of a sportsbike, and once you've got this cracked it'll keep up with most sportsbikes too.

So that leaves the poor X-11 in fourth place. However, because it seems to be universally unloved there is the potential to land yourself a bargain. It all depends what you want out of a bike. If the answer is to be accepted by your mates and to blend in then look away now. If you can see beyond this then the X-11 is a worthwhile option. For one thing, the build quality is impressive. Plus, the motor's strong and has more than enough performance to lose you your licence. On top of that, the bike handles well unless you're trying to keep up with a FireBlade.

And don't forget, you can get a much newer X-11 for the same money as the other bikes. If all you care about is having fun then it shouldn't matter what you do it on. Enjoy.

THANK YOU

- Robinson's of Rochdale (01706 716666)
- D&K Newcastle-under-Lyme (01782 861100)
- On Yer Bike Aylesbury (01296 655999)