

APPAREL PRO: ADV APPAREL



Ten years ago, I got my first introduction to adventure riding. My partner and I had both just quit our corporate jobs, were a little bit at loose ends and decided to live it up a little on a couple of small dual sport bikes. Somehow we got it into our heads that riding the Trans-America Trail (TAT) would be a good way to redefine our new life together on a couple of small dual sport bikes.

The TAT is 6,000 miles of mostly off-pavement travel east to west across America. The trail is made up of dirt, gravel, forest and farm roads and I would go so far as to call it the "Iron Man" of adventure motorcycling.

The time we spent on the trail was one of the most rewarding – and demanding – of my entire riding career. We both started out with more idealism than skill and a hodge-podge of protective apparel we dug out of our closets. We rode and lived in our riding gear morning to night, learning a lot about ourselves, our machines and about motorcycle apparel features and benefits (and sometimes lack thereof) from long days of arduous travel.

Adventure riders look for gear that can span diverse riding environments and changing temperatures, keeping them warm, cool and dry in all elements. Comfort is critical, and the ability to wear the garments not only all day, but also for days on end, is the hallmark of this type of gear. It's a tall order for one piece of apparel, but with the technological advancements in materials in the decade since my epic adventure, it's an exciting time for motorcycle dealers stocking adventure apparel.

This past week, I've been in two dealerships on two different coasts talking to experts and handling apparel. What's hot right now is the latest iteration of abrasion-resistant, waterproof, breathable - and stretchable - materials, used in a variety of combinations. A longstanding feature difference for ADV apparel has been the waterproof outer shell versus

removable waterproof liner preference for consumers. This season, there's a switch-up among the top brands with regards to their approach to waterproofing.

BMW has traditionally used a Gore-Tex inner liner in their adventure suits. This year, the BMW Enduroguard suit uses dynatech and dynatech stretch material so BMW now has a waterproof exterior shell.

Rukka, a brand not too widespread throughout the USA, yet a company with a long tradition of innovation in the waterproof apparel market, has traditionally used a waterproof outer in their adventure apparel. This season, Rukka has moved to a floating Gore-Tex Z-liner in its men's and women's Flexius adventure jackets.

Constructed entirely of abrasion-resistant 500D stretch Cordura on the outside, the Rukka jacket has extra give in the material which eliminates bunching and provides an incredibly dynamic fit for increased rider comfort.

These new jackets make me think about riding the TAT again – this time in comfort.

"I've heard it time and again. It's better to just buy the right gear in the first place and not try to pinch pennies over something that's disposable," said Edwina Carabajal, apparel manager at Irv Seaver BMW in Orange, CA. From first-hand experience I know she's right! 

