

# ANY QUESTION

# ANSWERED ✓

If we don't know the answer, we'll find the person who does



Importing that dream classic is easier than you'd think. Just be sure it has its papers

## OWNING & RIDING

### Q How easy is it to buy a classic and import it yourself?

I've always wanted a 1950s Moto Guzzi Cardellino after seeing one when I was a kid on holiday in Italy, and the pension rule reforms mean I now have the budget. But most of the bikes I've seen are in Europe and I'm not sure where to start bringing one in.  
**Gerald Luff, email**

**Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN**  
When you've found the bike you

want make sure it has its correct registration document and any other papers as you'll need to present them to UK Customs and Excise for any import duty payable and to get the bike re-registered in the UK. As long as the bike is more than 50 years old then a lower Classic and Historic VAT rate of five per cent applies. Don't use it on British roads until it's on a UK-plate as there can

be hefty fines to pay. There are plenty of firms who offer trailer delivery services.

MCN reader Graham Howie brought a Nimbus – a 1950s Danish four-cylinder bike – back from Denmark to Manchester using Chas Mortimer delivery service, which cost him £470.

Graham had a bit of trouble sorting out paying for the bike, converting Sterling to Danish

Kroner. When he checked the exchange rate offered by his bank and the charges it added over 4% to the agreed price. After a search online, he found TransferWise, an online-only operation that offers you the same mid-market rates you see on the news, not the 'Tourist rate'. On the £5700 he sent to Denmark he worked out it saved him £300 in hidden fees compared to using a bank.



It could be tricky to fix sluggish Gixxer

### Q How do I get my sluggish GSX-R750 back on the pace?

I love my Suzuki GSX-R750 K8 but it has become really sluggish right through the rev range. There's an FI code C46 showing up.  
**John Ryan, email**

**Answered by Keith Ball, Streetbike**

The K8 has an Exhaust Control Valve that closes at 3000rpm to get through the EU emissions regulations, then reopens at 3200rpm. It's a guillotine valve operated by two cables and if it seizes or a different electrical resistance comes through to the ECU, the motor stops. You can't get a replacement valve for the system and a set of new downpipes is £1000. Some people say you can move it with a spanner, but it's not like an EXUP valve on a Yamaha. Instead it has a small gearing system with plastic parts and if you get a spanner on it you will probably shear them off. You really need to get it in dealer setting mode at a workshop and let them set it open. There are wires you can disconnect, but they vary from model to model and it's a job for an expert. You also get the FI code up if you fit an aftermarket pipe, but some brands have plug-ins for the O<sub>2</sub> sensor that clear that, so I'd always look to get one of those makes.

### Q CB500X is forking awful over bumpy roads

I have bought a new Honda CB500X and generally find it very good except for the front end, which seems very harsh, especially on rougher patches of road. There's no adjustment so what can I do to improve matters? I weigh approximately 98kg.  
**Richard Bradley, email**

**Answered by Gareth Evans, Reactive Suspension**

The CB500X has very basic damper rod forks with fixed orifices for the damping oil to flow through, so they lock up at high suspension speeds on rough roads and are too soft at low speed. That harshness is mainly damping with some spring thrown in. You need a pair of emulators for £149 with 15-weight oil and 0.85-0.9kg per mm springs matched to your weight for £95 for a pair.



Those budget forks can be improved

### Q Health issues mean I need a light bike for £1000

I've had a stroke which has left me weaker on the left side. I think my Honda Deauville is now just too heavy, so I need a lighter bike, but I'll only have about £1000 to spend on the deal.  
**Ray Stone, email**

**Answered by Michael Neeves, MCN**

A naked bike would be a lot lighter than the Deauville and plenty fall within your budget, but you're not going to get the weather protection. However, there are half-faired versions of bikes like the Suzuki SV650, Kawasaki ZR-7 or Suzuki Bandit 650 on sale now at [mcbikesforsale.com](http://mcbikesforsale.com) if you could stretch to a few more quid. The SV especially sits you 'in' and low down on the bike and has a peachy engine.



SV650S is low, cheap and top fun too

## TRAVEL & TOURING

### Q What are the secrets of long-distance pillion lugging?

**Answered by Kevin and Julia Sanders who rode around the globe in 19 1/2 days (two-up) earning a Guinness Record**

Travelling with a pillion is an awesome way to share an adventure. But there are a few adjustments that have to be made. If you haven't already, you'll need to brush up on your slow control as it will be more important than ever with the extra weight. Get used to riding

slowly with a precise throttle, clutch and back brake in tight situations. The key is practice, so load up your bike with gear and take a few dry runs. Suspension will also come into play, so if your bike isn't up to the task then upgrade the rear shock or shocks. If that's too costly then increase the preload and adjust the set-up for two-up riding and don't forget to inflate your tyres to the recommended pressures for riding with a

passenger. Use your back brake more to reduce the amount of dive at the front.

Changing gear earlier and sometimes going up two gears at a time can help with smoothness. If you can stretch the budget to a comfort seat or an AirHawk pad (£165-£175, [www.airhawk.co.uk](http://www.airhawk.co.uk)) your pillion will thank you. And the final bit of advice is to pick up an intercom system, which makes all the difference on long rides.



Kevin and Julia are world record holders for two-up riding. And they're still talking

## TECH WATCH

### Q How important are chains?

Chain drive may seem simple, but there's a lot of complicated stuff going on. One oddity is how the efficiency of chain drive changes with speed. Chains are around 98% efficient at low speeds, but at high speeds this can fall as low as 85%.

This is partly due to friction from the bearing surfaces. Larger-pitch chains with bigger-diameter bearing pins are needed to transmit high power, but while the friction increases more or less in proportion to the pin diameter, it increases with the square of the speed.

More energy is lost through inertial forces, which also increase with speed squared. At the top of the chain run, the links are travelling at a constant speed and direction, so there are no energy losses. But



Go too small with the front sprocket and you'll feel pulsing in the chain

when the links meet the sprocket, they're forced to change direction until they're travelling just as fast in almost the opposite direction at the bottom of the run. It takes energy to make them do that.

Sprocket sizes are also important. It's best to have an odd number of teeth on one sprocket and an even number on the other,

as this makes wear more even. The front sprocket mustn't be too small, either – partly because there won't be enough teeth engaged with the chain to transmit the power, but also because a tight circle increases inertial losses and bearing friction.

A less obvious reason is called the 'polygonal effect'. When the chain is on the sprocket it forms a polygon shape, where each link is one side of the polygon. This leads to cyclic speed changes: when a link first reaches the sprocket, each roller touches it first at the bottom of the valley between the sprocket's teeth. But as the chain moves around and the polygon is formed, the contact point between sprocket and chain moves further up the tooth which is pushing the link around. This changes the effective diameter of the sprocket as the chain goes around it, creating pulsing speed changes which you feel as driveline roughness. The bigger the sprocket, the less this effect is.

## MCN LAW

Your legal questions

### Q My lawyer doesn't seem to be on the case

Last week I was involved in an accident when a car pulled out from a junction from my left (my right of way, not speeding according to a witness and the police) and I collided with the front wing of the vehicle, before being launched over the top of their car. I have multiple injuries consistent with hitting a car at 40mph. I was wondering what kind of compensation should I be expecting. Also my bike is being kept in storage, which is incurring fees and my solicitor doesn't seem great.  
**S Adams, Newquay**

Your compensation for pain, suffering and loss of amenity will depend on your prognosis, which medical experts shall be instructed to advise upon in due course. Also it will depend on the extent of financial losses flowing from the accident, for example loss of earnings, the cost of future private surgery and so on. I am unable to give you figures at this stage. If you are not happy with

### 'If you are fully-comp your insurer should arrange to collect the bike'

your insurer-appointed lawyers you are still within the 14-day cooling off period so you can cancel their instruction and switch firms.

If you are fully comprehensively insured your insurer should be arranging for the collection and repair (if it is not a write-off) of your bike. If your opponent has admitted liability they can be invited to deal with this. If there is currently a liability dispute and you are not fully-comprehensively insured, then it is your responsibility to make arrangements for its collection. Reasonable storage fees are recoverable from the third party assuming your claim succeeds. But you cannot leave the bike in storage incurring fees indefinitely.



**Andrew Campbell**  
Solicitor and author of the MCN Law column for the last five years

**Andrew Campbell, Bikelawyer.**  
Visit [www.bikelawyer.co.uk](http://www.bikelawyer.co.uk) or email [andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk](mailto:andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk) or call 01446 794169

**Bikelawyer**  
Motorcycle Accident Solicitors

### Q How can I keep my lovely new leathers in top condition?

Could you advise on the best care products for my new leathers?  
**Bob Manchester, email**

**Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles**

Saddle soap is a great place to start. It's readily available from bike and horse shops and many use this on its own as they're happy with the cleaning and treating properties it offers. Storm is the brand we stock and we get positive feedback about it. The latest stuff from Muc-Off

makes some good claims and they offer a good sized tube of both cleaner and protector (£7 for each). Autoglym make a £6 leather cleaner cream, which works well on my bike seat, and they also have a leather care balm for £7.50. Dainese make a small twin-pack of treatment for £19.98 whilst Putoline come to the party with leather wax for £7.

Always read the instructions and try a small area first to check for colour issues. The back of the calf is my favourite.



**Storm Saddle Soap**



**Muc-off Cleaner and Protector**



**Autoglym Leather Cleaner**