



1984/85 version. Original TS125X or TS125XUE with drum front brake.

SUZUKI'S TS125 has been around for 17 years in various different forms. All of these have established a reputation for being reliable, durable and trouble-free, as well as being easy to service and repair. However, Suzuki have never really achieved the level of success enjoyed by Yamaha with their DT models.

When Suzuki introduced their TS125 in the early seventies, the whole concept of trail bikes — at least in the modern sense — was relatively new. There had previously been 'street-scrambler' type machines, but these were little more than road bikes with high-level exhaust systems and sometimes with off-road tyres.

To begin with, trail bikes were much the same size as their road-bike cousins, but as time went on they grew steadily taller. This was partly to accommodate long-travel suspension and partly to respond to the demands of fashion.

In keeping with this general trend, the TS125 has grown taller with each revision, until the TS125X took the seat height to a level which caused short riders real problems.

Ironically, a 125cc trail bike is what many novice riders use for their Part One tests and this aspect can make newer models less suitable, as they can be harder to control when manoeuvring.

Other obvious trail bike changes include the styling, the engine, the rear suspension and the front brake.

Styling has moved from the simplicity of the first models, through the relative blandness of the ER to the pseudo-motocross looks of the TS125X.

Engines come in various types, all of which are very reliable. The current 124cc water cooled motor is used in all versions of the TS125X. Other versions have 123cc air-cooled engines. This capacity increase is due to the stroke having been lengthened from 50mm to 50.6mm, the bore being 56mm for all versions. The first models had piston-ported five speed units, while the ER and N used a six-speed reed-valved version. The appearance of the ER engine changed for the single-shock ERZ, but the internals remained much the same as in twin-shock ER models.

The rear suspension started off as two rather lightweight shocks, moved on to larger laid down items on the early ER, changed to Full-Floater (single shock) layout for the TS125ERZ and stuck with this concept for the TS125X.

All models have a drum brake at the rear. Most also use a front drum but this was replaced by a disc in 1985 with the introduction of the second 'X' model, the F.

These features should be sufficient to give you a fair idea of what model a bike is. The details in our panel should enable you to identify the model more precisely.

ALL of the air cooled models have much the same performance — top speed is about 63mph. Average fuel consumption is around 65mpg under normal use or considerably less if you ride

Suzuki

Chris Dell lists the virtues of



1981 model TS125ERX, very similar to ERT and ERN.

everywhere flat out.

Water-cooled (X) versions come in full power (a claimed 22bhp but they weren't very big horses) and learner legal (12bhp, but really only about 4bhp down on the '22bhp' version). The difference between these is simple in the extreme. There is a washer in the top of the header pipe which restricts the power output.

This washer is welded in place but it can be removed very easily. This is only legal for riders who have passed their tests and the washer **should** be refitted before selling the bike. Besides increasing the performance, removing this restrictor also makes the bike run cleaner.

Riders wanting fashionable machines that have a fair turn of speed (once de-restricted) will surely go for an X. These certainly look the business and cosmetics are, of course, a major factor in determining what people want to buy. Prices run from around £500 for an early X bought privately to over a grand for a clean, late example from a dealer.

The previous ERZ models (pleasant enough though they were) suffered from a relative lack of popularity because they didn't look the part. Yamaha had launched their DT125LC in 1982 and Honda's MTX125 was introduced in 1983, but it took Suzuki until 1984 to launch their TS125X.

Those looking for something cheaper, or for something with a lower seat, could consider an ER model, either the single-shock ERZ or the older twin-shock models. Any of these, in good condition, would be a good and inexpensive option.

For a real bargain-basement buy you could look at a TS125N. The N was only

available briefly during 1984/5, and was a cut-price machine even when new. Retailing at around £600 — while an ERZ was £800 and an X was near £1000 it just had to be good value. However, there aren't many of these about but if you can find one, you could do a lot worse for around £350.

That sort of price could also get you a twin shock TS125ER, but it would be a couple of years older. Or you could get a rough example of a late, Full-Floater ERZ, though tatty bikes need to be checked over very carefully before purchase.

Pre-ER versions would have been the best choice for those with short legs but they are getting old now and tend to be rather grotty. If you can find a good one, you should get a nice little bike for £100 to £150.

THERE are few problems with these bikes. All versions have good engines though obviously there will be trouble if people treat them really badly.

De-restricted X models should have a B9ES spark plug — using a B8ES can result in piston failure. On the early X there were a few cases of water temperatures gauges breaking.

On a Full-Floater the shock linkage should be stripped and greased every year or so if the bike is only used on the road, perhaps twice a year if you go off-road a bit. Failure to do this will eventually cause seizure (and the linkage will then be much more difficult to strip).

Exhaust systems can clog up, especially on restricted machines. These have the same oil pump as full-power models so they are really getting far more oil than they need. This oiliness often spreads a greasy



Current 1989 model TS125XUJ with new graphics on seat and radiator guard.

Price Guide

For pre-1979 machines expect to pay £100 to £200 for a sound example, depending on age and condition. Few good examples of these models exist.

TS125ER	TS125X	TS125N
1979 £150-225	1984 £475-595	1984 £295-395
1980 £165-240	1985 (disc brake) £500-660	1985 £350-450
1981 £190-290	1985 (disc brake) £540-695	1986 £395-495
1982 £230-340	1986 £625-795	
1983 £280-395	1987 £750-920	
1984 £340-475	1988 £850-1050	
1985 £425-575	1989 £995-1250	
1986 £495-675		

In all cases, the lower price refers to a bike which is in basically sound condition and being sold privately. The top price is for a bike in good condition, sold by a dealer with a warranty. Good examples sold privately, and scruffy examples sold by dealers will fetch prices in between the listed values.

TS125

Suzuki's venerable

trail bike

range

and lists the many different versions

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too...

mess over the back of the bike. Obviously it is wise to use a good, clean-burning two stroke oil, and don't add any oil to the petrol.

Disc brake versions can wear their pads very quickly. You need to inspect the pads frequently — say every 1000 miles during normal use. The front drum was rather poor though, so it is well worth going for a disc-brake model (an F or later, 1985-on) if you want to be able to stop.

On all versions, but especially on pre-X models, it is as good idea to check the exhaust system's condition. These tend to rot.

Spokes also need careful inspection; these will tend to come loose if the bike is used hard off-road. Even during road use regular checking is prudent, especially if the bike is used for wheelies.

The TS125X offers a rather strange riding position for road use; anyone wanting a bike for long-distance use is unlikely to be happy with one of these. Older models are a bit more comfortable — they don't have the X's steeply sloping seat which is part of the problem.

Handling is adequate by trail bike standards, though not as good as some of its competitors. Performance isn't as good as some others either — whether comparing 'full power' or restricted versions.

Lighting on six-volt models is poor, but even later 12 volt machines aren't that impressive. All the electrical systems are generally reliable.

The suspension on later models is quite soft, with a large amount of travel. This is good for off-road use but it does mean that when you brake hard during road use the

forks compress a great deal. This is a nuisance at night since it causes the headlight to point at the floor, so you can't see the corner that caused you to brake in the first place.

Model guide

TS125: Air cooled, twin shock rear suspension. **J** 1972; **K** 1973; **L** 1974; **M** 1975; **A** 1976; **B** 1977; **C** 1978; **N** 1984.

TS125ER: Air cooled, twin shock rear suspension. Frame numbers start TS1252-3.

ERN: 1979. First ER model, box-section swingarm, ER written on seat.

ERT: 1979. Much the same as the ERN.

ERX: 1980. Much as ERT.

TS125ER: Air cooled, Full-Floater rear suspension. Frame numbers start SF11A-1.

ERZ: 1982. Based on ERX revised styling; TS written on seat. Now fitted with 12 volt electrics.

TS125X: Water cooled. Full-Floater rear suspension. Frame numbers start SF13B-1.

XUE: 1984. First X model; motocross styling, drum front brake.

XUF: 1985. Much as XUE but with disc front brake.

XUG: 1986. Similar to XUF.

XUJ: 1988. Similar to XUG but with disc rear brake.

● The U denotes a 12bhp model. For the full power model omit the U.

The years shown above indicate the year in which that model first became available in the UK; in some cases models remained available for two or three years until another version was launched, or until remaining stocks were disposed of.

This soft suspension also removes some precision from the handling but largely this is a matter of re-adjusting if you have previously been riding a bike with a firmer set-up.

Equally, the tyres needed for off-road use aren't ideal for road use. Some grip well on tarmac, but most wear rapidly — and hard riding on soft-compound tyre can mean you're buying new rear tyres every couple of thousand miles.

Braking is fine on the disc-equipped models, but older machines simply don't stop rapidly, especially when two-up. Having said that the drums used on the TS125 series are no worse than on many other trail bikes.

For off-road use, the superior suspension of later models certainly a good point — but their tall seat height is a drawback unless you have long legs. Short riders will have real trouble getting a foot down quickly should the need arise.

TAKEN all round, a TS125X is a sound machine with few vices. It isn't the best of the modern 125 trail bikes but it will do virtually everything well enough and is very reliable.

It is a good looker and a bit cheaper than its competitors — and these two factors alone will continue to generate sales.

Pre-X models offer several advantages — better on-road handling, a lower seat height and engines which are easier to work on — but they don't look as good. This makes them less popular, so they are cheaper. This can make them excellent buys for those seeking a reliable machine which is well-suited to both round-town use and gentle off-road use.