

Yamaha XJ 900F 1995

PRICE GUIDE: £1,200-£2,200

A description of my definitive tourer goes as follows: it should comfortably carry two people and their luggage, do a minimum of 150 miles between fuel stops, and maintain a real-world cruising speed without knacker the engine or the rider (for me, 90mph is fine). It'd be nice if it was cheap to buy and service, too.

The Yamaha XJ 900F, which first hit the streets in 1983 and was eventually superseded by the Diversion in 1994, does all of this, adding shaft-drive and an almost bulletproof big-capacity four. The bike we tried, registered in '95, was one of the last made, and with 39,000 miles on the clock it had just been bought from the original owner for £2,000. It came with a full service history and was fitted with a set of Krauser K1 panniers, which were cavernous and completely waterproof, if a little bulky to carry off the bike.

Little changed in the XJ900's 11-year production run, other than growing from 853cc to 891cc, and the replacement of the anti-dive forks with conventional 37mm telescopic in late 1984. The later model also sported a belly pan, not fitted to our test bike.

First off, I guess that I'd been spoiled by the Guzzi's centre



stand, as the three other bikes all needed a lot more heaving and tugging, especially when fully loaded. The XJ rolled on to the stand easily enough, but getting it off again could be a two-person job. Mind you, after those big twins, the controls felt feather-light, and I very much liked the style of the handlebars, individually mounted on the top yoke, although it's a shame that Yamaha hadn't pushed the boat out and made them multi-adjustable a la Laverda Jota.

The frame-mounted fairing was much slimmer than that of the RT and as a result gave the bike's front end, with its non-adjustable suspension, a planted and positive feel. I could have benefited from a slightly higher screen because at speed it channelled the wind straight onto my face, but there was little or no turbulence for a passenger perched on the comfortable and roomy seat.

With close to 100bhp on tap, and much lighter flywheels, the Yamaha possesses vastly different power characteristics to those of the rumbling twins, with better response at higher revs. But it was torquey at low revs too, and the XJ scored heavily on twisty A-roads, thanks to its extra grunt out

of 50mph corners and when overtaking tractors.

The sweet selecting five-speed box was much quicker than those of the other bikes, although on several occasions I was left looking for a non-existent sixth gear – fours, even as torquey and big as this one, still sound busier than a twin. The brakes, twin discs at the front and single at the rear, easily hauled the bike down from speed, and at the end of the ride it had returned 53mpg from its 22-litre tank. This Yamaha may not possess the charisma of its European stablemates, but it's dead reliable, and represents a lot of bike for little money.

TIPS & POINTS

Yamaha's DOHC four is tough, and with regular oil changes can clock up very high mileages. Check the bike's cosmetics carefully, as machines that have been used year round can suffer from salt attack on the alloy once the lacquer has been eaten away.

Also, check the operation of the brakes – pistons can stick in their callipers – and silencers are prone to corrosion from underneath (however shiny they look on top). Beware of high-mileage ex-despatch bikes.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Air-cooled four

CAPACITY

853cc

POWER

98bhp

WEIGHT

218kg

FUEL CAPACITY/RANGE

22 litres/250 miles

CONSUMPTION

53mpg

BUYING & RUNNING

There are plenty of XJ900s on offer, and you won't need to search specialist



dealers to find one. So spares aren't a problem either – any Yamaha dealer should be able to get hold of just about anything. And



if you want to save money, there's always the breaker.

OWNERS' CLUB

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And the winner is >

