

*from the Educator:*

Back in the summer of 2001 I took delivery of my first 1800 GoldWing. I say first because I do expect that there will be others to come. Anyway, after a month or so of living and driving the 1800 I wrote two articles, one voicing the virtues of the 1800 and one the not so wonderful points of the 1800. Five years, 76,000 miles later I thought I would share some more thoughts about Honda's flagship touring motorcycle.

To start with, and probably end with, the 1800 has made me a much better motorcycle rider. The 1800 is still much more capable than I will ever be, but I continue to try and learn. When I have returned to riding a 1500 I found that my riding skills far exceed the level I had ever obtained while owning the 1500, thanks to what I've learned on the 1800.

Handling, let me repeat to emphasize, Handling, is probably the number one reason that the 1800 is such an excellent touring motorcycle. Low speed maneuvers or parking lot maneuvers are always a trying time and a challenge for most of us. The 1800 makes the 1500 look like a German Tank. I continue to recommend to anyone, especially to the older rider, that it is much easier to handle an 1800 in the parking lot than the 1500. Simply holding up the bike at a stop is also easier and more secure than the 1500. Coming to a stop, with its anti-dive front end and frame design, is less troublesome than the 1500. Highway handling is better on the 1800, not by a nose over the 1500 but by a length or more. [The smoothness of the radial tires, the stiffness of the frame, the aerodynamics of the bike, all create a calm envelope of air, for both the driver and the passenger, no matter what speed between 55 and 85.](#) It invites you to sit back in your seat and relax, something you didn't feel on the 1500. Don't get me wrong, the 1500 is more plush and a softer riding bike. But when you want to go 500 miles in a day, at the end you will be much less strained on the 1800 after that ride.

Engine power is certainly a big plus for touring and a big plus for adding plain fun to your riding pleasure. Sometimes I hear that some may shy away from the 1800 because of the bigger engine, but this is also one of the factors that goes into the item mentioned above, better handling. It makes starting, passing, and stopping easier. If you pull a trailer or have a passenger the extra power is very welcome.

It was indicated that Honda wanted to attract younger buyers and put sport into our touring machine. But I think it just brought out the "sport rider" in most of us. With radial tires, a stiffer frame, more capable lean angles, a more aggressive upper body seating position and better aerodynamics most of us are pushing the 1800 through curves and turns deeper and quicker than on our 1500's.

The lighting on the 1800 is superior, period. Even though we add additional lights, the stock lights are the best any motorcycle has seen to date. The stock seat is excellent although a back rest is still needed for more comfort. Passenger seat angle is leaned too much to the rear and needs to be changed, hopefully that will come soon. I have learned to pack the same things that I had in my 1500 and I don't have any complaints about the difference in storage capacity, it is not significant. The AUX input for the IPOD is terrific, but I am not impressed with the auto volume or the CB, the 1500 was better. An electric windshield would be really nice.

I think the very first addition to your 1800 other than the CB would be the wind deflectors that mount under the mirrors. Unfortunately, the mirrors do not block air onto your hands and worse than that, there is a strong flow of air that comes under the mirrors, flows along the underside of your arms, around your back and right into the chest of your passenger. In very hot weather, this can be a wanted thing, but during any other weather conditions, this is a real annoyance. The after market deflectors do a fantastic job of getting rid of nearly 90% of this unwanted air flow. I use the Baker Built wings, I think they offer you the most variety of positions and look good. But anything that blocks that flow is good. For the sole purpose of ease of cleaning, I highly recommend some sort of front fender extension.

The 1800 seat is larger and it tilts your hips a bit backward, helped by the slightly forward foot pegs. This starts to make a more casual seating position as compared to the 1500, but then things change when you reach for the handlebars. The handlebars are very much forward and wider than the 1500, which has you lean your upper body forward to grab them. I'm not really sure what they had in mind with this combination but after driving long distances you will find if you are average to smaller in stature that you can't completely relax your shoulders and they will ache a bit. Your 1500 brought the handlebars very far back and your elbows were well bent and nearly next to your sides. Now we bring in the after market stuff again, and as

many are doing, we are adding small metal plates that bring the bars back a little and help to relax your shoulder position. Please note, there are different types and you need to check them out before buying.

I could go on, but Ellary says I use too much space as it is, so as I said at the beginning, the 1800 makes me a better rider and I love this bike.