

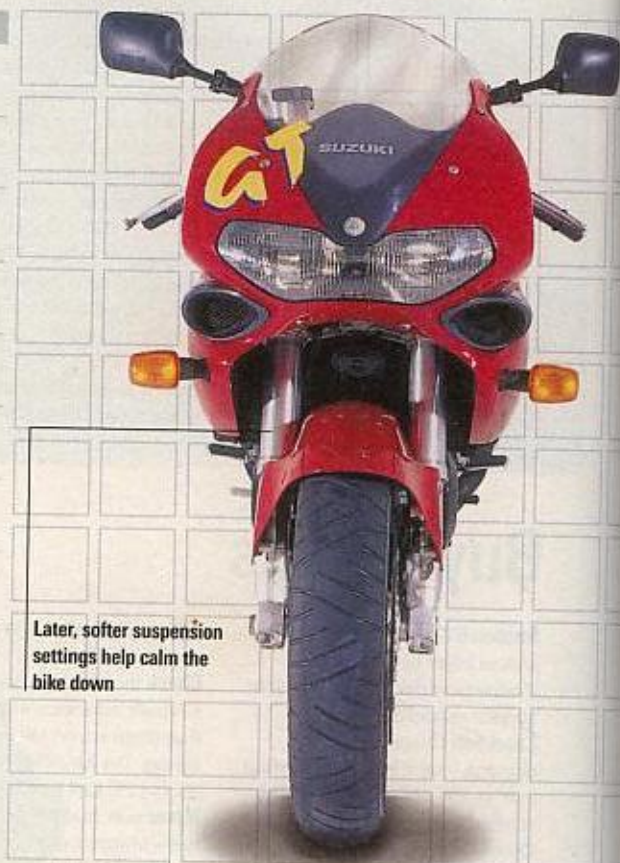
# Suzuki TL1000S

1997-current

■ Top speed 159mph (1998, 1999), 145mph (2000) ■ Weight 191kg (dry) ■ Fuel consumption 32mpg ■ Engine 996cc, 90° V-twin ■ Ins grp NU14

|       | Dealer | A1    | Poor  | What happened?   |
|-------|--------|-------|-------|--|
| 1997P | £3700  | £3400 | £3100 | TL1000S-V introduced in red, blue or black   |
| 1997R | £3800  | £3500 | £3200 | No changes   |
| 1998R | £4000  | £3750 | £3400 | W model introduced with detail changes to suspension, carburation and engine. Red, black or silver with revised decals |
| 1998S | £4150  | £3850 | £3500 | X model introduced in red, black, blue or silver with revised decals   |
| 1999S | £4400  | £4100 | £3700 | No changes   |
| 1999T | £4600  | £4300 | £3900 | No changes   |
| 1999V | £4700  | £4400 | £4000 | No changes   |
| 2000V | £4850  | £4550 | £4250 | Y model introduced in black, yellow or red   |
| 2000W | £5000  | £4700 | £4450 | No changes   |

Model shown: 1999 Suzuki TL1000S-X



Later, softer suspension settings help calm the bike down

## Will I like it?

If you want a bike that's easy to ride and asks little of its rider, look elsewhere. A TL1000S demands care and concentration. Respect it and you should enjoy one of the most effective engines out there. Abuse it and you could have a life-changing experience. But get a bad 'un, and the cost of repairs and roadside recovery could tarnish your view of biking, full stop.

In its original form the bike was too unforgiving, but with a steering damper and the later, softer suspension and power, it's calmer.

If you're familiar with big sports bikes, you should be fine with a TL1000S. It'll help if you're big – short riders have a job reaching the ground and light riders may find the bike lacks stability over bumps.

But by modern Japanese standards, the TL1000S is unreliable. If dodgy fuelling, weak bearings and disintegrating shock mountings don't worry you, fine. Just don't bank on an easy ride – in any sense.

## Which one should I buy?

Ideally, a genuine UK bike that still has some warranty on it. Then you can check the bike over before the warranty expires. If you buy a parallel, make sure you know exactly what you're getting, particularly where differences to the UK model are concerned.

One with Maxton (01928 740531) suspension would be handy. The Maxtonised TL1000S tested in the July 1997 issue felt more stable than a standard bike and had better ride quality. Maxton's conversion involves revalving and respringing the forks and replaces the standard rotary rear damper with a conventional Koni shock.

From the W (1998) onwards the power delivery was softened, making the bike feel slower, even though it isn't. So some people will prefer the early model for its livelier feel, while others prefer later, less edgy models.

## Will it be reliable?

The two big problems involve gearbox bearings and the rear damper mounts.

The gearbox bearing should last over 20,000 miles but after that the risk of failure increases rapidly. Early warning signs may include oil leaks, noise or vibration from the gearbox but as the bearing is a double type there may be no sign of trouble, even if one section has already started to fail.

The rear damper mountings can crack if there is too much clearance between the damper and its mountings. If these cracks spread the mountings may break away from the frame. The mountings and the damper then move together, resulting in a loss of damping. But because the damper is independent of the spring unit the bike doesn't become unsafe in the way it would if a conventional rear suspension unit broke loose.

## Is it expensive to run?

It depends whether or not you have any problems. If the gearbox bearing fails after the warranty has expired you'll be looking at a serious bill. If the rear damper lugs crack off and you want to fit a new frame, or want a dealer to totally strip the bike so the frame can go for repair at a specialist, then again you're spending real money.

You've got the problem of the high insurance group – typically, this means you'll need a garage and maybe an approved immobiliser or alarm. And even with that lot, it'll still cost an arm and a leg if you're young and live in a high-risk area.

Otherwise it's just the usual cost of petrol, servicing and tyres, none of which are above average for a 125bhp bike.

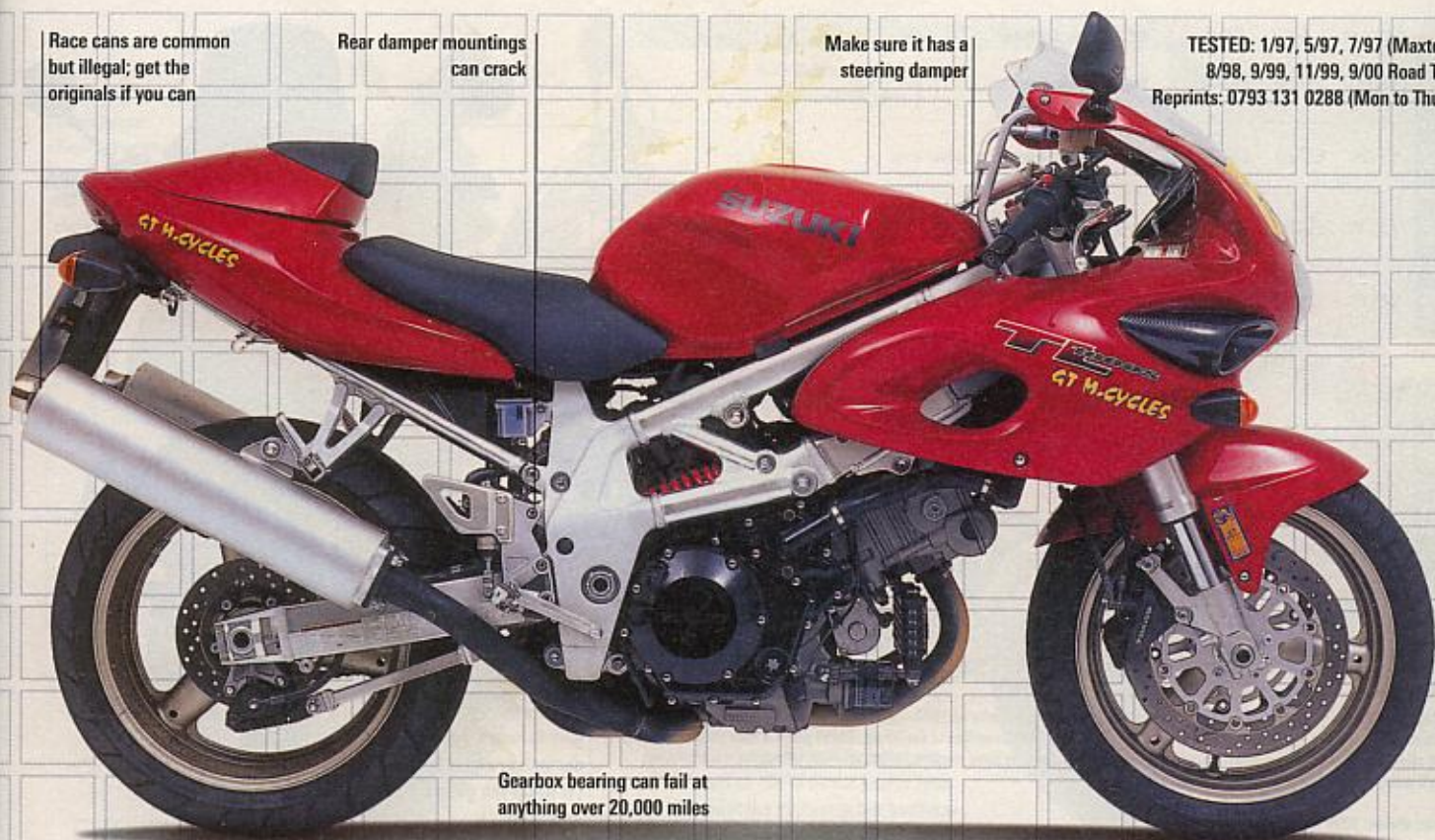
At times controversial, occasionally a handful, never boring. Suzuki's TL1000S is a bike for thrill seekers, combining a great V-twin engine in a sharp and sometimes nervy chassis. Chris Dell is your guide

Race cans are common but illegal; get the originals if you can

Rear damper mountings can crack

Make sure it has a steering damper

TESTED: 1/97, 5/97, 7/97 (Maxton), 8/98, 9/99, 11/99, 9/00 Road Test Reprints: 0793 131 0288 (Mon to Thurs)



Gearbox bearing can fail at anything over 20,000 miles

### Can I improve it?

For most people, the big improvement to early bikes was the steering damper, this should have been fitted under warranty. If you get an early one (a V model) try the later, softer, suspension settings as they give an easier ride and can help reduce twitchiness. These will be a particular improvement for light riders. Set fork compression 2½ turns out, rebound 2½ turns out, and drop the front tyre pressure from 36.3psi to 32.6psi. Set rear compression to 2½ turns out, rebound 2½ turns out, and spring length to 185.5mm.

Race cans are popular but as they're illegal for road use, and may invalidate certain aspects of your insurance, they can't really be called an improvement.

You won't be able to tell if the rear damper has excess play until you get the bike home and can slacken the mounting bolts, when there should be only a tiny amount of play. Excess can be taken up with shims and is probably a dealer job.

### What should I look for?

Check for cracking around the rear damper's mountings. Also check for repair work. Caught early it shouldn't be a big problem to get cracks welded up, but if a bad job has already been done, you won't even know if the mountings are now correctly aligned. And if there are cracks, you'll certainly want to knock the price down, if you're still willing to buy the bike.

Make sure the rear wheel turns smoothly with no noise from the gearbox bearings – you'll ideally need a paddock stand to be able to check, or get the owner or dealer to lift the bike on the sidestand.

Watch out for parallel imports. Besides the kph speedo and lights that may not meet UK requirements, there's the worry of buying a low power model. Loads of 98bhp versions were imported from Europe; they have enough performance for many riders, but you, tiger, might be disappointed. So beware.

### What's the competition?

There's plenty of choice if you want a big V-twin. Suzuki's own TL1000R gives you much the same engine in a more modern chassis and a full sports fairing. Honda's VTR1000 Firestorm is a very different kettle of fish and tends to appeal to different buyers. Riders wanting hairy-chested sports excitement buy a TL, people wanting an easy-going option will prefer the VTR.

The Italian alternatives come from Ducati and Aprilia. A 916 was the ultimate sports twin and for some people that may still hold true. What it loses in reliability and comfort some would say it makes up for in style, stability and character.

An Aprilia perhaps doesn't carry the cachet of a Ducati but an RSV Mille is certainly a lot of bike for the money, with the less sporty Falco being even more so. Both have good reliability records so far.

### What else should I know?

The first model had an ECU (electronic control unit) that gave over-rich low-speed fuelling so a modified ECU was introduced. However, bikes with race cans and a modified ECU might run a bit weak, so may feel a bit better on the original unit. The original ECU's part number ends in 1, the modified version's ends in 0. Lift the seat and take a look, the ECU and its part number are clearly visible.

Early models had a fuel tank gasket that could leak. This was replaced, along with the petrol tank, under warranty. Some grey imports may have been missed.

Clutch slip can occur under modest acceleration, such as when rolling the throttle on after rolling it off, due to the back torque limiter sticking. Ironically it usually grips if you give it a fistful. Cleaning the back torque limiter up, so it moves freely, should fix it. If the clutch slips when using full performance, new clutch springs may be needed.