

Moto Guzzi in the Dakar Rally



In 1984 a local amateur rally racer, Claudio Torri, approached Moto Guzzi with the idea of competing in the Paris-Dakar on their newly released V65 TT enduro.

He offered to pay some of the expenses in developing a bike for him to ride in the next Dakar, and was given access to the experimental section of the race department's workshop and assigned an engineer to help him build a bike. Within a short time they modified a V65 TT, fitting the basic necessities of a long distance desert racer: long suspension, huge fuel tank, and extended wheelbase for sand riding stability. Torri's

"TTC" (Tutto Terreno Competizione) prototype *almost* made it to the finish line the 1985 Dakar – only breaking a rear wheel in the last stage.

The bike is still ridden in Mandello, and is the inspiration for the new V85TT model's colour scheme.



The French Moto Guzzi importer was impressed by Torri's special and negotiated an order of 15 similar bikes from the factory - creating the Baja model.

Each Baja was hand-built by a small team taking about one month to assemble many custom-made parts from Marzocchi, Acerbis, SDM and their own Guzzi workshop. Prepared for the Dakar a 50 litre alloy fuel tank is fitted, but for shorter rallies a smaller fibreglass tank was optional.

At least six Baja survive today. The TTC on display in the factory museum was built after the initial order was completed.

Inspired by Torri's great performance, Moto Guzzi decided to attempt the 1986 Dakar with a fully supported factory team using two professional riders. Understanding they needed to improve the 650 Baja to have a chance against the Cagiva and BMW teams they used the newly-released V75 4-valve 750 engine as the basis for the next series of desert racers.

A prototype for the Dakar 750 was created by making Baja-style modifications to a V75 chassis. A new air cleaner system put the filter in the front of a 40 litre ABS fuel tank. Redesigned suspension at the front and rear complemented the upgraded engine. The bike was raced during 1985 in both France and Spain to get rider feedback and test the new engine. After a successful season the bike was left in the race department and new bikes were built with modifications.





The main alteration from the prototype design for the competing Dakar bikes was fitting an additional 12 litre fuel tank in the seat area to meet the Dakar's '50 litres of fuel' requirement. The rear of the frame also changed substantially to support relocated electrical components and the mandatory 2 litres of water. The power output was around 62 HP and dry weight of 162 kilograms, which was similar to the Cagiva Elefant. The full Titanium exhaust system contributed to the low weight.

Torri competed in 1986 as part of the factory squad on a new V75 Dakar (#122 below).



Unfortunately, all of the bikes suffered from repeated universal joint failures, and ultimately one bike (#120) caught fire.

No bike finished the race, and this was the end of Moto Guzzi's factory team for the Dakar. One team bike is on display in the factory museum.



No Dakar finish for a Moto Guzzi? ... there was!

In 1979 a group of intrepid French men and one woman entered the Dakar using V50-based specials that looked similar to the V65TT that would come 5 years later.



All the bikes had failures, notably breaking rear wheels – a problem that would surface again in 1985. Team members kept one bike running using parts from the other four,

Bernard Rigoni was the only rider from the group to finish the rally, and to date the only person to ride a Moto Guzzi across the finish line of the Dakar.

He was also one of the riders in the 1986 Moto Guzzi factory team (#120).

Moto Guzzi in the Wynn's Safari



A surprising entrant for the 1986 Australian Wynn's Safari was the unstoppable Claudio Torri with a version of the V75 he used in the Dakar race. Painted in bright pink, it didn't prevent him being hit by a car on the second day of the Safari.

Another bad result for him, but he was an inspiration again – because the Australian Moto Guzzi importer entered a

standard 650 NTX in 1987 race. The 650 NTX finished well and convinced the importer to tackle the event with more resources the next year.



In late 1987 the last of the factory desert racers was built to order, destined for the 1988 Wynn's Safari. This bike is based on the 750 NTX rather than the V75 and so has a 2-valve engine. It still has the Dakar style extended swing arm and Ohlins shock absorbers, but the stronger final drive housing from the 750 NTX is used for the first time.

The bike was raced by the 1986 Safari winner Allan Cunynghame in rallies in Europe and South America before being shipped to Australia. It has been seen in a few different liveries before taking on the Yokohama colours for the 1988 Safari.



Allan's race ended badly with a crash caused by navigation error. After repair and sale to a local racer, the bike re-appeared in enduro events until 1997.

Keeping the TTC history alive...

With two 650 Baja models, the Wynn's Safari 750 and the Dakar prototype 750, Australia has the largest single collection of TTC enduros outside of Europe.

Any stories, parts, or more TTC bikes can be sent to the curator of this collection: phil@guzzi.com.au



Claudio Torri: Never Give Up

The factory team never returned to the Dakar, but the man who started it all didn't stop.

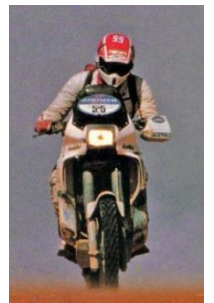
In 1987 Torri rode in the Wynn's Safari using a V75 similar to the factory rally bikes. This was his last ride on the small twin. Perhaps all the lessons learnt with the factory bikes pushed him to begin constructing his own Dakar racers.



He entered the 1988 Dakar on a new Moto Guzzi 950 twin that was based on the old round-barrel engine. He didn't finish this Dakar either.



In 1989 he returned to the Dakar but mounted on a KTM, perhaps as a way of learning the secrets to finish the race, because this time he did.



*But for the 1991 Dakar he once again entered a Moto Guzzi - his most ambitious racer: "La Severe" Based on a square-barrel SP engine it features reversed heads (rearward facing exhaust) and fuel injection, and **chain final drive**!. A hand-built alloy chassis got the weight down to 207 Kg, and in all, an amazing creation. Sadly, he didn't finish.*

