

MINITEST:

Yamaha XJ650 Seca

Lack of specialization is its own reward.

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The Yamaha XJ650 apexes its way from Europe with the handling to establish its residency on American backroads

A lack of specialization makes the XJ especially suited for this country.

• Maybe the significant thing about the Yamaha XJ650 is that it broadens rather than limits the options for a ride. In an era of specialized motorcycles, that's the exception, not the rule, because part of the *quid pro quo* of specialization is a limiting of function. The XJ650, which is so *un*specialized, can work well almost anywhere, and it works terrifically on that in-between distance—the 50-to-500 mile ride so familiar to most riders.

The XJ650 accomplishes this well-rounded adaptability because it's a multi-role, competent motorcycle. That doesn't mean all work and no play, but rather a carefully conceived approach to building wide capabilities. While the Seca delivers enormous entertainment-per-mile, nowhere on the XJ650 is function sacrificed for mere frivolity; instead, the solid understanding of a motorcycle's function is so woven into the bike as to enhance its fun factor. The result is two-wheeled enjoyment for the serious rider.

An examination of the bike's details reveals no technology particularly *avant garde*, just basic considerations for the purpose of a motorcycle and the needs of its rider. That technology includes shaft drive, which appeals to the maintenance-free in each of us, but is not often thought of as applicable to sport bikes. The XJ650 disproves the notion; its shaft drive eliminates all but the tiniest bits of unsavory shaftie behavior, and only on really bumpy surfaces does the effect of more unsprung weight make itself known. The five-speed gearbox shifts crisply; and the brakes—

dual discs in front, drum in rear—are sure and positive. All this, of course, is the way it should be. But at 469 pounds, the Seca is perhaps a little *more* than it should be, though it is one of those bikes that seems to ride lighter than it is. The standing quarter-mile is covered in 12.83 seconds at 103.44 mph; again, not startling, but entirely up to the job.

Which about sums up the 650 Seca.

YAMAHA 650 SECA

Importer: Yamaha Motor Corporation USA
6555 Katella Avenue
Cypress, California 90630

Category	street
Suggested retail price	\$3099
Engine type	four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts
Bore and stroke	63.0mm x 52.4mm
Displacement	653.4cc
Compression ratio	9.2:1
Carburetion	four 32mm Hitachi constant-vacuum
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	36mm stanchion tube diameter/5.7 in. (145mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	5-way adjustable spring preload/3.9 in. (100mm)
Wheelbase	56.5 in. (1435mm)
Seat height	31.3 in. (795mm)
Weight	469 lbs. (213kg)
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	12.830 sec., 103.44 mph (166 kph)
Top speed (calculated)	125 mph (201 kph)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	135 ft. (41m)
Fuel consumption	44 to 59 mpg (19 to 25 km/l)
Warranty	6 months unlimited mileage
Available color	Quartz Silver only

Beyond the contemporary technology and measured numbers is the way in which the less obvious of its attributes convey the message of competence and adaptability. You ride on a simple bench seat, feet on slightly rear-set pegs that are in exactly the right place, hands on fairly low and narrow bars. It's an anatomical ideal; neither tourer, nor racer, but *right*. The effect is undisturbed by the narrow two-valve-per-cylinder engine. Only a minor buzz around 5000 rpm. interrupts the XJ's otherwise silky climb to redline, and throttle response is a textbook example of how to connect twistgrips to carburetors. The exhausts are tucked cleanly under the engine and wrapped tight to the frame in back, the side- and centerstand are out of the way, and the bike must be leaned to extreme angles before metal scratches asphalt. And if the Seca's non-air-assisted suspension is a model of convention, it still soaks up concrete mistakes. And the XJ650's eight-inch halogen headlight is a shining beacon that shows that the designers figured this bike just might have to answer to serious riding.

It is only after that serious riding that the XJ650 shows its colors: This is a motorcycle that accommodates and assists the rider, rather than forcing him to accept any compromises that result from its specialization. As such, the Yamaha XJ650 might not be your pick if you could have any number of motorcycles to satisfy your riding wants, but it certainly would be a choice if you could have only *one* motorcycle. —Don Fuller