

BETTER RIDING

What can I learn from BMW Rider Training?

It's not just off-road skills for Ewan and Charley types – BMW offer road-skills training for riders in South Wales. And you don't even need a BMW bike to benefit

Words **Simon Weir** Pictures **Mark Manning**

 The roads of South Wales are brilliant – the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons provide some of the best riding in Britain. And the best bit? Hardly anybody seems to know it. Well, apart from BMW Rider Training, who are based just north of Swansea (next door to Simon Pavey's BMW Off-Road Skills school). With their own accommodation, a decent classroom set-up and even bike and kit hire for those who need it, Kevin and Julia Sanders' Rider Training operation is ready to do everything from CBT to advanced rider training, right up to putting riders through the RoSPA test.

The trouble with all advanced training is that different people need different things from it. To test the BMW operation, we sent two very different riders up: RIDE's deputy editor Simon Weir, who's a RoSPA instructor and advanced-riding convert; and photographer Mark "Weeble" Manning, who definitely isn't. How would chief instructor Ian Rogers manage such different riders? Here's what they thought.

THE CLASSROOM

SW: Each course is tailored to the riders so we didn't spend too much time inside – we had a thorough run over the theory but,

showing that we knew a bit, we spent more time on the bikes. What impressed me was the clarity with which Ian presented everything.

MM: He did make it simple to understand. And if I had a different opinion, we'd discuss it – have a proper conversation to sort it out. There was much more of a compromise than on any other course I've done, where you just get a bloke lecturing you and not taking on board your point of view.

THE ASSESSMENT RIDE

MM: I don't like leading at the best of times so I did feel pretty nervous. Especially when

RoSPA instructor Weir gets a taste of his own medicine





you know there's an instructor watching everything you do, it puts a bit of pressure on you... I might have ridden a little more by the book than I normally would.

SW: The assessment is crucial for the instructor to see how you normally ride and I thought the route was really good. It certainly caught me out at one point. But I thought the debrief was really good - I'd realised my mistake, but Ian really got me thinking about why.

MM: Yes - he managed to make me feel like I was doing things right, where other instructors seemed to want to make me feel I was doing everything wrong.

THE INSTRUCTION

SW: We had a full day's ride on some excellent roads. Ian really got me thinking about the whole of my ride and encouraged me to sharpen it up.

MM: I was much more relaxed on the rest of the day's ride. Probably because I'd got to

know Ian better by then - got to see that he's just a normal, bike-riding bloke. Some of his hints and tips really helped me relax and ride more normally.

SW: Was it things you didn't know?

MM: I don't think so, but he certainly picked me up on things I'd stopped doing. Like taking a more central position in my lane when coming up to blind crests. I knew about that, but I'd forgotten. That's really stayed with me since then.

SW: I learnt new stuff. You always do when you ride with new people. Ian really got me thinking about planning for lorries, especially on tight turns when they might run wide - which sounds like a small thing, but having to instruct an instructor must be a real pain because we usually think we already know it all.

THE VERDICT

MM: I think courses like this are well worth it every couple of years. You might not learn anything new but you'll definitely be reminded of things you've stopped doing. It can really help you sort out any bad habits you've picked up.

SW: The thing is, not all courses are the same. I was really impressed with how this one was tailored to our pretty different needs, wants and expectations as riders. It doesn't matter whether you want to do a course that leads to a qualification of some sort, this is an excellent way to brush up your skills.

WIN! A BMW RIDER TRAINING COURSE WORTH UP TO £919

Want some of this excellent training? One lucky RIDE reader can win the course that suits them - complete with accommodation and the use of a BMW bike, if you want to use one - simply by answering this question (hint - you may need to check their website for the answer)

Where is BMW Rider Training based?

To be in with a chance of winning, simply email your answer to

info@bmwridertraining.com

- remember to include your name, address and telephone number. The course will be on the normal two-to-one basis, subject to availability on a date agreed, at the level and on the bike agreed to be most suitable for the winner's needs. If this is a Level Three course, the winner can supplement it with the RoSPA test for £200.

Closing date: July 9 2010

COURSES AND PRICES

REFRESHER LEVEL ONE £619

Two-day/two-night course for two riders, including accommodation, is designed for those who have had a long break from riding. Riding includes exercises on a Tarmac training facility as well as up to 200 miles on the road. If you ride your own bike, it costs £519.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TWO £869

Three-day/three-night course for two riders, including accommodation. Structured for those who don't cover many miles a year or are worried about bad habits. It covers topics such as countersteering, cornering, overtaking, observation and planning, road positioning and low speed control, with up to 400 miles riding. If you ride your own bike, it costs £669.

ADVANCED LEVEL THREE £919

Three-day/three-night course for experienced riders, including accommodation, and regular riders looking to fine tune their skills using advanced riding techniques, covering up to 600 miles. If you ride your own bike, it costs £719. It's possible to add an extra day with a RoSPA test for an additional £200.

INDIVIDUAL PREMIUM TRAINING £279 PER DAY (£299 WITH PILLION)

One-to-one courses focusing in great detail on your individual needs. Rider-and-pillion courses also provided. If you use your own bike, IPT costs £229 (or £249 with pillion) per day.

For more information visit: <http://www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk/world-of-bmw/rider-training>

"I LEARNT NEW STUFF. YOU ALWAYS DO
WHEN YOU RIDE WITH NEW PEOPLE"