

# FARKLING THE BMW F650GS TWIN



by Gary Prickett

THE WORD “FARKLE” has entered the motorcyclist’s lexicon of familiar terms. Although the origin of the word and its meaning are the stuff of urban legend, a logical suggestion is that it’s a contraction of “function” and “sparkle.” Thus, the commonly accepted meaning is: An accessory item that enhances not only the functionality of a motorcycle, but also its appearance. It has also been postulated that the word farkle is an acronym for Fancy Accessory Really Kool Likely Expensive. Other forms of the word have also been established, such as Farklitis: The irrepressible urge to buy new accessories, and continuing to purchase them even as their functionality becomes less and less.

Over the years, after owning a number of different motorcycles, I find myself purchasing an increasing number of farkles to improve the enjoyment and function of each successive motorcycle. For the 2009 F650GS that I purchased late in '09, the intended purpose of the selected farkles is to enhance its use for sport riding and sport-touring. Although several of the items selected have a definite off-road bias, conquering unpaved roads and fording flood-swollen streams is not the primary mission for this bike.

The first five farkles were BMW accessories ordered at the time of purchase and installed by the dealer prior to delivery. Any one or all of these could have been purchased from a number of aftermarket accessory suppliers, undoubtedly saving some money. However, experience has taught me the inevitability of the “law of unintended consequences” when it comes to farkling one’s bike: The greater the number of farkles acquired from different sources, the greater the probability that there will be conflict in the fit and compatibility of said farkles. So I began with factory accessories designed to not only work with this particular bike, but to also work in conjunction with each other.

## BMW Vario Side Cases

Cost: \$1141

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.bmw-motorrad.com](http://www.bmw-motorrad.com)

BMW Vario Side Cases with factory mounting hardware and keyed to match the ignition lock, provide one of the best removable motorcycle luggage systems on the



market. These rugged cases have the unique and convenient ability to expand their depth by 2" when a bit of extra storage space is needed. They are, indeed, pricey at \$1141, but you get what you pay for.

## BMW Crash Bars & Bash Plate

Cost: \$428/\$317

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.bmw-motorrad.com](http://www.bmw-motorrad.com)

BMW Crash Bars provide protection for the engine and body panels in the event of the inevitable parking lot or parking garage tip-over. A BMW Bash Plate protects the underside of the engine and particularly the vulnerable front-mounted oil cooler and oil filter.



## BMW Hand Guards

Cost: \$211

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.bmw-motorrad.com](http://www.bmw-motorrad.com)

BMW Hand Guards incorporate a rugged aluminum tubular frame for protection. The upper wind deflectors can be easily removed to increase cooling air flow to the hands for summer riding. There is also something to be said for their “cool factor.” Appearance, after all, is important.



## Cee Bailey Headlight Protectors

Cost: \$39.95

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

[www.ceebaileys.com](http://www.ceebaileys.com)

Having once had to pay several hundred dollars for a headlight assembly to replace one that was destroyed by a rock thrown up by a large truck tire, I vowed never to let that happen again. Fortunately, there are a number of different brands and styles of headlight protectors on the market from which to choose. I selected the simple and straight-forward two-part set from Cee Bailey. At \$39.95, it’s cheap insurance that would pay for itself many times over if another rock is tossed in its direction.



## BMW F800GS Windshield

Cost: \$257

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

[www.bmw-motorrad.com](http://www.bmw-motorrad.com)

During the model evaluation of the F650GS Twin (MCN April 2009), I had the opportunity to ride it back-to-back with its larger sibling, the F800GS, as did other



members of the staff. We were unanimous in our opinions that the windshield on the F800GS, which has a centerline height of 9", did a far better job of wind management than did the 2" shorter version on the F650GS. When I made my list of factory farkles to be installed on the F650GS prior to delivery, the F800GS windshield was at the top of the list.

### ZTechnik VStream Sport Touring Windscreen

Cost: \$159.95

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

[www.nationalcycle.com](http://www.nationalcycle.com)

I was satisfied with the F800GS windshield for 10,000 miles before finding the ZTechnik VStream Sport Touring Screen. With height and width dimensions of nearly 15", the VStream model is obviously larger than the stock F800GS screen but it is certainly no barn door aerodynamically. Its organic shape is not only aesthetically pleasing but very effective in diverting airflow, providing a clean airflow around the rider's head. In addition, its lower width enhances wind management characteristics by offering more protection to the rider's torso, as well.



### ZTechnik Mirror Extenders

Cost: \$39.95

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

[www.nationalcycle.com](http://www.nationalcycle.com)

To facilitate being able to turn the handlebars without interference between the edges of the ZTechnik windshield and the bike's mirrors, a set of Mirror Extenders is available and necessary. These extenders move the mirrors out from the bike an additional 2" on each side. This has the additional advantage of making the width of the mirrors the same as the width of the Vario side cases when fully expanded. This is a benefit when maneuvering in tight places or lane splitting. If the mirrors can clear a narrow pathway, so can the side cases. Although the right hand guard touches the edge of the windshield when the bars are turned to the full left position, this turn angle is so extreme and the interference fit so slight, that it does not present any problem under normal riding conditions.



Had I been aware of the availability of the VStream Sport Touring Screen and Mirror Extenders during the initial farkling process, I would not have needed the F800GS windshield.

### Eastern Beaver ADVrider Waterproof Low Profile Socket Kit/Powerlet

Cost: \$50.95 & \$ 11.95

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

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[www.easternbeaver.com](http://www.easternbeaver.com)

[www.powerlet.com](http://www.powerlet.com)

Although BMW has provided a power outlet that is suitable for supplying the necessary juice to feed a GPS or electric clothing, its integration into the CAN-BUS



electrical system of the bike has some ramifications. For example, the electrical system is shut down 45 seconds after the ignition system is shut off. This means that anything plugged into this outlet, such as a battery charger, will not receive power after the electrical system is shut down. Not wanting to purchase a special BMW battery charger that can overcome this technological obstacle, and wanting a second power outlet to power electrical clothing while the stock outlet is occupied powering the GPS, I opted to install an auxiliary outlet powered directly from the battery. A bit of Internet searching turned up the ADVrider Waterproof Low Profile Socket Kit from the Eastern Beaver Company. After determining that a triangular plastic panel on the left side of the bike would provide a suitable mounting point for the socket, and followed by some measuring, I ordered the \$50.95 Socket Kit in the 24" length. Since the mounting position I selected places the socket just behind the bend of my left knee, I also replaced the straight BMW plug on the end of my electric vest's power cord with an \$11.95 angled Powerlet socket to minimize interference.

### Touratech Front & Rear Brake Fluid Reservoir Guards

Cost: \$44 (front)/\$40 (rear)

Satisfaction: ●●●●○/●●●●○

[www.touratech-usa.com](http://www.touratech-usa.com)

As with almost all modern motorcycles, the G650GS' brakes are hydraulically activated. This requires the presence of a brake fluid reservoir for each of the front and rear brake systems. The fluid reservoir on the F650GS looks like an afterthought, perched atop the handlebar near the right brake lever. It is also mounted in such a way as to move around like one of those bobble head dolls that get periodically handed out at major league ball games. Touratech provides a wide variety of off road oriented accessories for BMWs as well as several other brands. Their \$44 Front Brake Fluid Reservoir Guard (shown) was installed, and is effective in not only providing protection against accidentally dislodging the reservoir from its vulnerably exposed location, but also keeps it from moving around like a flag in the wind. An accompanying \$40 Guard was also installed on the rear brake reservoir just to maintain continuity of appearance.



### Garmin Zumo 550 GPS

Cost: \$900

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

[www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)

A GPS has become an essential aid to me for planning riding routes in unfamiliar locales, and in general finding the most effective way from Point A to Point B. I chose the Garmin Zumo 550 because of its ease of use and the capability to be used on both a motorcycle and in an automobile. Mounting to the motorcycle's handlebar was easily accomplished with the hardware included with the unit. Twelve-volt power from the motorcycle is available from the power socket located next to the ignition switch. Accessing this power source involved grafting a BMW power plug onto the appropriately shortened power cable. Although



# Feature

the Zumo 550 has a MSRP of \$900, a bit of shopping can result in a significant savings.

## Bill Mayer Saddles Seat

Cost: \$444

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.billmayersaddles.com](http://www.billmayersaddles.com)

The number of companies in the motorcycle industry that specialize in replacement seats is testimony to the lack of satisfaction that many riders have with the stock seats on their bikes. I have certainly found that to be the case with every motorcycle I have ever owned, and have come to include the cost of a replacement seat as part of the price of buying a new motorcycle. For this motorcycle, I turned to Bill Mayer Saddles for a couple of reasons: I'd had a custom seat made by this company previously which survived 120,000 miles of use with no degradation in comfort or appearance. In addition, the company's location, just 130 miles from my home, means I can schedule a ride-in, and have the seat custom made to my size and shape. At a price of \$444, there is no doubt in my mind that if I were limited to only a single upgrade on a motorcycle, this would be my best choice.



## RKA STARR 1 Rear Seat Bag

Cost: \$145

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.rka-luggage.com](http://www.rka-luggage.com)

Although I had chosen to outfit my bike with a set of BMW side cases, it was never my intention to use these for anything other than multi-day sport touring trips. For the more usual day trips that I like to take, I needed some means to carry a few essential and convenience items.

For this purpose, I chose soft luggage from RKA, whose 8-liter-capacity STARR 1 rear seat bag is a near-perfect shape for the tail end of the F650GS, and it has plenty of room for a tire plug kit, electric tire pump, mini-Mag light, compact torx wrench set and a few other small items. The STARR 1's unique mounting system provides for easy removal and attachment of the bag when necessary. RKA has since discontinued the 8-liter model and replaced it with an expandable 14-liter version. The price has also been increased to \$150 for the color-matched bag.



## MachineArtMoto MudSling

Cost: \$159

Satisfaction: ●●●●○

[www.machineartmoto.com](http://www.machineartmoto.com)

The MudSling is a plastic molded piece that extends the leading edge of the rear fender to just below the inner forward area of the swing arm. Its purpose is to provide a shield between the rear tire and the rear shock absorber. Without it, the shock will be



subjected to a constant barrage of mud, rocks, water and other road debris being thrown by the rear tire. It's a worthwhile investment in maintaining the performance and appearance of the rear shock.

## RKA "Pine Flat" Expandable Tank Bag

Cost: \$130

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.rka-luggage.com](http://www.rka-luggage.com)

For a tank bag, the 11-liter "Pine Flat" Expandable Four-Point Wedge Bag is appropriately shaped to match the curvature of the F650GS' faux gas tank, with a mounting system that prevents any movement that could potentially scratch the paint. Although it is generally used in its compact configuration, it can be expanded to accommodate the jacket liner that gets shed as the temperature rises, or that six-pack of soda that gets picked up on the way home. The prices of \$145 & \$130 respectively, include the optional color upgrade to red, to match the color of my motorcycle.



## RKA Expandable Liner Bags

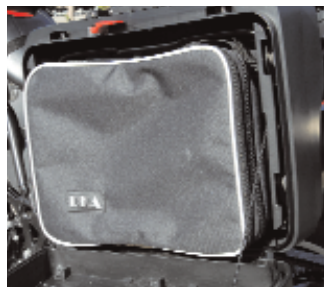
Cost: \$105

Satisfaction: ●●●●●

[www.rka-luggage.com](http://www.rka-luggage.com)

I also ordered a set of the RKA Expandable Liner Bags for the BMW Vario Side Cases at a cost of \$105. I've learned over the years that the convenience and utility of side case liners is head and shoulders above the attempt to utilize plastic trash bags or some other cheap alternative to perform this function.

In the past, I have almost immediately replaced suspension components due to the less than satisfactory performance of the stock items. This has not been the case with the suspenders of the F650GS Twin, which have proven satisfactory for the type of riding I like to do. Because suspension components are a wear item on any motorcycle, the time will come when the investigation of replacement items will begin and the farking process will continue. That should make for some interesting choices and decisions down the road.



## RESOURCES

Cee Bailey's Motorcycle Products  
[www.ceebaileys.com](http://www.ceebaileys.com)  
800-788-0618

ZTechnik Products by National Cycle, Inc.  
[www.nationalcycle.com](http://www.nationalcycle.com)  
708-343-0400

MudSling by MachineArtMoto  
[www.machineartmoto.com](http://www.machineartmoto.com)  
908-996-7210

Eastern Beaver Company  
[www.easternbeaver.com](http://www.easternbeaver.com)

Touratech  
[www.touratech-usa.com](http://www.touratech-usa.com)  
800-491-2926

Garmin  
[www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)

Bill Mayer Saddles  
[www.billmayersaddles.com](http://www.billmayersaddles.com)  
800-242-7625

Powerlet  
[www.powerlet.com](http://www.powerlet.com)  
877-752-7835

RKA Motorcycle Luggage  
[www.rka-luggage.com](http://www.rka-luggage.com)  
800-349-1752