

Aerostich Transit Riding Suit



review by Scott Rousseau

LEATHER OR TEXTILE? Textile or Leather? The debate will probably never end. Textile gear certainly has its share of advantages for everyday use. It's usually cooler, lighter in weight, easier to maintain and (in most cases) offers the rider the option to layer clothing underneath. It's also more affordable.

But for outright crash protection, there is still no better material than good old-fashioned cowhide to protect your own hide. Leather is more abrasion resistant, and unlike some textiles it won't melt or transfer heat from the road surface to the rider's skin. On the other hand, leather jackets and suits can be bulky and hot for everyday riding, and quality leather riding gear is often much more expensive than textiles.

With their all-new Transit Suit, however, the folks at Aerostich have adapted new technology to leather to produce a suit that is designed to maintain the road rash protection of leather and yet can be worn daily. Made in Vietnam, the Transit suit introduces a new material called Gore-Tex Pro Shell Leather to the market.

Most people are no doubt familiar with Gore-Tex material's ability to allow body moisture to escape through its membranes while repelling moisture or wind from the outside, which keeps the wearer dry and warm in colder temperatures or dry and cool in warmer temperatures. The Transit suit's Gore-Tex Pro Shell Leather features Gore-Tex technology right in the hide itself. The hides are first tanned using a proprietary solar-reflective pigment that is claimed to keep the suit as much as 30° cooler than traditional leather suits when worn in the sun. This dye technology also increases the suit's resistance to aging. After a Gore-Tex membrane is inserted between the hide and the liner, powerful water repellents are also added to the hide in two stages, making the leather waterproof. Millions of perforations (Aerostich calls them "micro-vents") are then added to the surface of the leather, allowing moisture from inside the suit to evaporate through it, even when fully closed and zipped.

Speaking of zippers, the jacket's main zipper is an all-new design with molded teeth that ensure the suit remains waterproof without sacrificing functionality, and the rest of Transit's zippers are waterproof as well. The jacket has three zipped outer pockets and two inner pockets, and the pants have two more zipped front pockets for a total of seven. The jacket and pants can also be zipped together in the back, increasing crash protection by reducing the chance of separation at the wasteline during a crash. Zippers on the pant legs also facilitate pant and/or boot removal.

While the Transit is designed to stay cool in the sun, it can also be worn in the rain because it won't soak up moisture, a problem that can add heft to traditional, untreated leather suits. To verify

Aerostich's waterproof claims, we completely doused our test unit with heavy spray from a garden hose for over three minutes. The Transit completely repelled the water, even on the Gore-Tex Oran flex panels on the jacket's inner elbow/underarm areas and waist cuffs, leaving the test rider dry as a bone inside. The suit also dried quickly afterward, with no discernible change in weight or bulk to suggest that it had absorbed any water from our soak test. That's a good thing, as we found the jacket and pants to be heavy enough already when we weighed them. Our size 44 jacket weighed 6 lbs., 11.1 oz., and our size 36S pants weighed 4 lbs., 8 oz. for a total suit weight of 11lbs., 3.1 oz.

Of course, that weight includes Aerostich's energy-absorbing TF armor, which is placed strategically in the elbow, shoulder, knee, hip and back areas of the Transit suit. The viscoelastic armor stiffens during high-speed impacts, but otherwise it remains soft and pliable for less restriction of movement when riding.

The Transit suit is very supple and flexible when riding, and it feels almost like a second skin when you're seated on a motorcycle. The textile underarm and inner elbow panels on the jacket and the similar panels combined with stretch panels in the knees of the pants do a great job of allowing the rider unrestricted biomechanical movement. However, the bulk of traditional leather suits is still present when walking or just standing around in the suit.

It's also important to note that despite all of its perforations, the Transit suit is not a vented suit, so you feel no air movement through it when riding. Aerostich's solar-reflective pigment must be effective, though, because we wore the Transit on some warm, sunny Southern California days of over 80° F, and while we wouldn't describe the Transit as cool, it was far from unbearable. Even so, we were disappointed that the large back armor pad reduces the jacket's ability to wick moisture away from the rider's back. The lack

of ventilation created a large sweat spot on our underclothing, reducing overall comfort. Ditching the back armor increases the jacket's breatheability, but back protection is naturally sacrificed in the process.

Overall, though, we recommend the Transit suit as an excellent choice for all-around riding in a wide range of temperatures. The Gore-Tex Pro Shell leather's moisture resistance is excellent, and the suit proved to be comfortable enough for everyday use. Price is still a major consideration, however, as the Transit suit isn't cheap. The jacket is \$797, and the pants are \$697 for a total of \$1494, which is still less than the cost of a quality custom leather suit these days. Based on the performance of the Transit suit and on Aerostich's reputation for quality, it's money well spent. The Transit suit is available in jacket sizes 38–52 and pants sizes 30–44.



Aerostich's new Transit suit is a next-generation leather suit designed to be worn every day. Thanks to a new material, the Transit boasts the evaporative properties of Gore-Tex right in the leather itself.

Aerostich Transit Suit—Jacket \$797/Pants \$697; Aerostich, 8 South 18th Ave. West; Duluth, MN 55806-2148; 800-222-1994; www.aerostich.com; info@aerostich.com

Alpinestars Super Tech R Boots ●●●●●

review by Scott Rousseau

WITH MY TRUSTY track-day boots on their last legs (pardon the pun), I wasn't looking forward to ponying up for a new pair of road race boots, especially since my track day excursions are exceedingly rare. However, when a chance to test Kawasaki's all-new ZX-10R at Road Atlanta forced me to seek replacements, an unexpected opportunity fell right into my lap. Kawasaki PR guy Jeff Herzog emailed that the Alpinestars crew wanted to know if they could supply anyone with a set of boots for the test. Could they?! I was even more surprised when they shipped me their top-of-the-line road race boots, the Super Tech Rs, worn by MotoGP stars Casey Stoner, Nicky Hayden and Dani Pedrosa.



Lots of race boots on the market today offer plenty of safety features, but usually at the expense of comfort and flexibility. With the Super Tech R, Alpinestars set out to pack all of its race-proven safety expertise in a boot that can be worn comfortably every day. Of course, for racing, they still have to be durable, so the Super Tech Rs are constructed of high-tech micro-fiber, synthetic leather and suede fortified with impact-resistant Tuned Poly-Urethane (TPU) profiles—or guards—in the heel, toe and shin areas to maximize protection. But the front of the boot uses a soft TPU mesh to allow flexibility for better feel when shifting gears. The shin guard wraps around to cover the rider's calf, and it's shaped to dissipate energy across its entire surface during an impact. Similarly, the external heel protector is profiled to provide protection without sacrificing comfort or flexibility, and the achilles area features flex material that wraps around the lateral and medial sides of the heel to maintain ease of foot movement.

The Super Tech R's zippers are located on the outside rather than the inside of the bootlegs, keeping the zippers away from pos-

sible high-abrasion areas on your motorcycle's lower frame. The inner area is designed to be very flat and is covered with synthetic suede to reduce abrasion, making the Super Tech R a boot best worn outside the pants or leathers. Topping off the boot is an adjustable ratcheting top closure and a soft, flexible top gaiter designed to follow the contour of the rider's leg. The toes feature replaceable TPU toe-sliders. Optional magnesium sliders are also available.

Matching the outer boot's techno-trickery, the adjustable-fit inner boot features impact-resistant upper and lower profiles hinged together by torsion bars on the inner and outer sides of the ankle area, providing even more structure without hindering foot movement.

The Super Tech Rs fit like a glove and offer amazing flexibility for a racing boot, but it isn't track days and canyon rides that have endeared me to them. Rather, it's that Alpinestars has delivered on its promise to provide race-spec protection in a boot that can be worn every day. I've even spent some time sport-touring and walking in the Super Tech Rs, and they're the most comfortable boots I've ever worn, bar none. They offer excellent ventilation, and they're easy to put on or take off despite the inner boot.

So why not just run out and replace your favorite boots with Super Tech Rs? First of all, while they're among the most advanced motorcycle boots available, at \$449.95, they don't come cheap. And secondly, the Super Tech Rs are really designed to be worn outside the pant leg. Despite A-stars' efforts at streamlining them, the protective shin section may be bulky enough to prevent a decent fit with some leathers or riding pants, so if you wear your boots under the pants, you'll want to check the fit before you buy. However, if you are a sport rider seeking the ultimate protection, the Super Tech Rs are among the best boots on the market today.

Alpinestars Super Tech R Boots, \$449.95—2780 West 237th St., Torrance, CA 90505; 310-891-0222; www.alpinestars.com

Ténéré Expedition Tent ●●●●●

review by Steve Larsen

THE TÉNÉRÉ EXPEDITION Tent's ability to cover you, a passenger and a motorcycle may be its most intriguing factor, but there are other reasons you should consider it for your next tent. Covering your motorcycle (and contents) provides a warm, rain and wind-free place to work on your bike. In actual use, I found that the "garage" portion of the tent proved a highly useful spot for removing dirty or wet gear before stepping into the clean and dry portion of the tent where warm sleeping bags wait. With the bike under cover, it is also secure from prying eyes.



The Ténéré tent came to our attention prior to a two-week ride in Argentina and Chile where the distances to cover dictated several nights when hotels would be unavailable. A Google search of "tent and motorcycle" led us to the Denver-based company Redverz Gear (www.redverz.com), and the brainchild of motor adventure rider Kevin Muggleton. London-born, Muggleton spent 20 years as a traveler and photographer, with photos and stories appearing in National Geographic and European motorcycle magazines. The tent evolved from his personal requirements for a lightweight tent that would easily fit on a motorcycle and,

once set up, allow room for a full-sized motorcycle (yes, a BMW 1200GS Adventure will fit) so its gear would be safe. Camping in the elements of the Andes, Sahara Desert and Patagonia, it had to set up quickly with as few parts and pieces as possible.

The \$399 Expedition, billed as "the motorcycle tent designed for adventure travelers," is a generously-sized two-person tent with a 100" x 50" covered motorcycle bay with a peak height of 76", so if you're less than 6' 4" there's no need to stoop. Packed and stuffed into the included bag, it is about the size of a sleeping bag, although a bit taller and weighing in at 13 lbs., 6 oz. It fit comfortably behind my seat and in front of my top case. Pitching the tent was easy, even on the windiest night we encountered. It uses three "poles" which bend into hoops, making the walls nearly vertical. I was unable to match the sub-

4-minute set-up time in Muggleton's YouTube video, instead averaging about 10 minutes for a full set-up.

Although I didn't put my bike inside the tent every night, what first seemed like a luxury soon felt like a necessity—why don't all tents have compartments for motorcycles?

Ténéré Expedition Tent, \$399—Redverz Gear; Email: adventure@redverz.com; 720-213-8287; www.redverz.com