



Ural Troyka

A three-wheeled carriage

Text and Photography: Christian Neuhauser

🔊 *The Troyka's simple but effective dash display.*



Its root means "three" and most of us can recall the image of three fog-breathing horses hauling Dr. Zhivago's troika across the snow. Borrowing this sturdy name for their Troyka model, Ural, the Russian motorcycle manufacturer, has combined 40 reliable horses, with the cozy option of a sidecar, to handle all the road work.

I barely understand the guy on the other end of the line, but I do notice a Swiss accent in his English, and soon we're on the same page after switching into German, our mother tongue. Albert has called to offer me a test ride on his Ural Troyka when he rides by on his way from South Carolina to Connecticut.

All week long, I'm looking forward to this unusual experience. Sunday arrives and I meet Albert in the parking lot of the Village Inn in Clemmons. The Russian

steed, already unloaded, looks good in the sun. The two tones of black and maroon look pretty on the bike. I start it and curl a few "eights" in the huge parking lot behind the hotel. Albert sits in the sidecar advising me how to steer the curves.

At ease, Troyka finally loose in traffic, I head down Hampton Road toward Hwy 150. It handles easily (739 lb. dry weight) through the corners. The telescopic forks in the front and the hydraulic spring shocks absorb the bumps and

potholes very well. I grow braver with the appearance of each curve, but I risk too much in a corner that comes too fast. The front Brembo disc brake tempers my enthusiasm and reins us in reliably.

At Reedy Creek, I turn the bike and spur it back to Clemmons. The OHV air-cooled, four-stroke, flat twin cylinder engine gallops along on 91-octane gas over two Keihin L 22 carburetors. The fuel tank is solid steel and holds 5 gallons fuel.

Today's trip is nothing compared with the first ride I took on a Ural 15 years ago. Now – with its Brembo brakes, Keihin carburetors, and the Italian switches – the bike seems to be an international conglomerate, but the heart and character are still Russian.

At first glance, it resembles a BMW and there's a good reason for that impression. The story of IMZ-Ural began late in 1939, when a secret meeting was held in the Defense Ministry of the USSR.

The matter under discussion: What model of motorcycle is most suitable for Soviet forces. Settling on the example of BMW, the Soviets secretly bought five bikes in Sweden. By early 1941, the first trail samples of M-72 bikes were shown to Stalin and the go-ahead was given to produce them. Which brings us to today and this classic bike that looks like an older BMW. Even the gearbox and transmission work similarly.

The Ural factory proudly announced that more than three million bikes have left the plant in its 64 years of operation. The majority was sold with a sidecar. And after all those years, Urals remain a unique combination of price and classic styling (as in the '50s and '60s) and of course there's that sweet sidecar – It's just like my "daddy's bike."

The Ural enthusiast can choose between five different models to outrig with a sidecar, and there's also a solo cruising bike, the Wolf. As the company describes it: "The

🔊 *With room to spare: No need to call around for a replacement wheel and tire.*



🔊 *Sidecar perspective on a Piedmont curve.*



Wolf is a wild child created from an unconventional union between the Ural factory and the Russian Night Wolves biker club." You can find all the models on the Ural web page at www.mz-ural.com.

Directly affiliated with the plant in Irbit, Russia, Irbit MotorWorks of America is the only legally certified importer of Ural motorcycles in the USA.

The Troyka impressed me. It's got character and it's a fun ride. Sooner or later, I might even be able to reserve one of the stalls in the stable (my garage) for this frisky Russian mount.

RR

🔊 *A sidelong glance at the two-toned Troyka.*

