

Benelli's a shock hit

► New Benelli Tre899K first ride ►
Superb all-rounder ► Likely to be overlooked ► Verdict: ★★★★★



Michael Neeves
Senior road tester

FIRST RIDE

michael.neeves@motorcyclenews.com

This bike's bigger brother, the Tre1130K, is one of the hidden gems of biking. It's a fantastic all-rounder and is the best bike in Benelli's line-up - ironic considering the firm has so much racing heritage. So my hopes were high for the Tre899K.

With a price of £7999 and a UK distributor now in place to deliver sales, parts and service back-up, Benelli hopes the 105bhp, 898cc Tre899K will be a tempting choice for those who want comfort and style with a rasping engine note.

The bike is inspired by the TNT899 'super naked' produced last year, which was actually better than the bigger, 1131cc version. The Tre899K engine is in a milder state of tune to the TNT899's



898cc triple and a brilliant chassis

with different cams, timing, fuel mapping and smaller throttle bodies to give more mid-range power and peak torque at just 5000rpm.

It's a superb package

I got to ride it all day from the factory in Pesaro in northern Italy to Urbino via mountain roads and crazy Italian town traffic. It's a superb package. The spacious riding position is perfect and the pegs and handlebars couldn't be placed any more naturally.

The seat is nicely padded, there's excellent wind protection from the manually adjusted screen, the gearbox is smooth and with a big wide spread of power to play with, the Tre899K is simplicity to ride and very friendly. There's a 20.7-litre fuel tank for big miles and it comes fitted with Dunlop's brilliant RoadSmart sports touring tyres, which was MCN's 2008 tyre of the year.

As well as being as docile it has a fun side too. With the throttle nailed it accelerates hard, the tall riding position and the leverage offered by the wide bars make the Tre899K easy to flick through tight, twisty flip-flop corners. It's as agile as a big supermoto, like the KTM990SM or SMT.

Race-bred handling

With a chassis set-up perfected by test rider and ex-Bimota racer Gianluca Galasso, the Benelli is stable in the cor-



“It's as easy to flick through flip-flop corners as a big supermoto”

MCN'S MICHAEL NEEVES

ners and offers ample feedback, despite having non-adjustable 50mm Marzocchi forks and a Sachs rear shock adjustable for preload and rebound damping only.

To keep costs down there's no slipper clutch on the Tre899K like its bigger brother, so you do have a lot of engine braking, which is noticeable off the throttle at town speeds. It also lacks the bellypan and some of the plastic in-fill panels of the Tre1130K, to keep costs down, but that makes the bike 5kg lighter. There are a host of optional extras available from your Benelli dealer too, from luggage to Ohlins suspension.

Verdict

We rate the Tre899K. It's comfy, easy to ride, sounds great, handles well and has a wild side for when the mood takes you. It's not the obvious choice, which will actually be a plus-point for many, but some will be sceptical, worried about possible reliability and after sales woes. But remember Benelli is now owned by China's largest two-wheel producer, Qianjiang, who provide the cash for hot and cold running spares and there's an importer to look after you too. It's well worth taking a test ride.

THE FACTS

BENELLI TRE899K £7999

Engine	Liquid-cooled, 898cc inline-three-cylinder
Power	105bhp
Torque	55ftlb
Weight	210kg
Fuel capacity	20.7l
Colours	Black, green/silver

RIVAL

TRIUMPH TIGER
• £7999 • 114bhp • 74ftlb

MAXXIS
ULTIMATE CONTROL

MAXXIS SUPERMAXX SPORT
“Bloody impressive”
Chris Newbigging, MCN - Dec. 2008

“Silica rich, fast warming, Maxxis Supermaxx Sport tyres are unlikely to let go without me doing something stupid”
Chris Newbigging, MCN - Feb. 2009

“Maxxis were a mere 0.6s slower than the OE tyres - a difference of less than 1% on tyres that are 30% apart on price”
June 2008, as tested by BSB & TT rider Guy Martin

“The Maxxis were user friendly on the limits of grip”
Guy Martin, PB - July 2008

Maxxis • Carr Road • Felixstowe • Suffolk IP11 3RX
maxxis.co.uk • sales@maxxis.co.uk • 08704 282272