

2008 FLHX Street Glide™

MSRP \$19,125

Special thanks to Hacienda Harley-Davidson for providing the motorcycle

By Kirk Johnson August 2007

ABS brakes, do they really work on two wheels?

About the Motorcycle

The New Year brings exciting new changes. All Touring models now feature the new fly-by-wire hand throttle, a six-gallon fuel tank, Brembo® brakes and a new isolated drive system. Plus, they now have the option of an ABS system for front and rear brakes.

Fly-by-wire throttle is linked directly to sequential port fuel injection. Instead of cables controlling the fuel injection, an electronic sensor in the handlebars tells the injectors through a wire what your throttle hand is doing. With this feature, there will be less vibration transmitted to the handlebars and you will get precise metering for the fuel injection system. A new six-gallon fuel tank, up from five gallons in '07, will extend the range of all Touring models.

All Touring models feature a new Isolated Drive System that reduces noise and vibration to the rider for improved ride quality under acceleration, shifting and cruising. It's a bolt on unit that is attached to the real drive belt pulley, Brembo® brakes and optional ABS. A new Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS) (\$795.00) is available as a factory-installed option, by the dealer, on all Touring and VRSC models, and is standard equipment on the 2008 Electra Glide Ultra Classic 105th Anniversary Edition, CVO Screamin' Eagle Electra Glide Ultra Classic, and CVO Screamin' Eagle Road King. The ABS system maintains separate operation of front and rear brakes. Steel braided lines run from both master cylinders to a controller unit located under the right side panel, then back to the brake rotors. If the wheel sensors detect lockup, the control unit pulses the brakes up to seven times per second to prevent the wheels from locking up.

Looking at the motorcycle or the wheels alone, there's no way to tell if the motorcycle has the ABS braking system. To find a Touring model with the ABS option for the test ride we had to pop off the right side panel of several motorcycles to identify one.

One thing that sets the Street Glide™ apart from the rest of the Touring models at a glance is the short smoked windshield on the fork mounted Bat Wing fairing. Other features include a 160 Watt 4-speaker; AM/FM/WB/CD/MP3 advanced audio system by Harman/Kardon®; solo headlamp and bullet front and rear turn signals; low-profile, air-adjustable rear suspension; color matched saddlebag latches; rear fender ground effects with tri-line fender lights; fuel range countdown indicator and cruise control. Road test, A magic carpet ride

The Street Glide™ is the luxury sport model of the Touring line. I loved the short smoked glass windshield in the bat wing fairing. You can see clearly over the shield and at the same time have complete protection



from the wind. Not sure what would happen in pouring down rain though. This model also comes with all the gauges including cruise control and a stereo.

As with all of the other models in the Touring line, this rubber mounted engine runs real smooth until you stop. Then that rubber mounted engine thrashes around as if it is going to come loose. But as soon as you twist the throttle and start moving the bike, it resembles a magic carpet ride. The ride is very smooth and solid. It handles great in traffic and the acceleration is acceptable in the lower gears.

The sixth gear is great while on the highways. The only problem is the lack of power over 60 mph. You will find yourself shifting to a lower gear to find an acceptable acceleration rate. This engine was built to be up-graded. I am not sure how many stock Harley's are out there, but I highly recommend upgrading the horse power for better performance.

As for the fly-by-wire, not sure I could tell any difference. According to several people, they all said that they found the vibration on the handlebars to be much less. My main ride is a Sportster, so the Touring ride is so much smoother to start with, that I may not be able to tell the difference. I did notice how much cleaner the look is without any cables though. Looks great!

I could tell the difference in the isolated drive system. There wasn't a loud clunk when you shift. Then when you are in stop and go traffic the transition from slowing down to accelerating and back again was very smooth. Nice feature!

Now what I really wanted to test was the new ABS brakes. I did notice that they had separate systems for the front and rear brakes. So, of course, I wanted to test the rear brakes first. Aside from the knowledge of the





presence of the ABS system, you would never know they were on the motorcycle. You cannot tell by walking up to the bike and looking it over or by riding the bike and using the brakes. That is, until you create a situation that calls for its attention.

The first thing I did was find a nice quiet out of the way asphalt road. Then the fun begins. The first thing I did was apply enough rear brake to simulate a lockup. And of course the ABS system took over and pulsed the rear brake, not letting it lockup or skid. The peddle feels a little funny as it seems to go down a little more and you can feel the pulsing in the peddle. The bike came to a very controlled stop.

It didn't seem to stop very fast. Almost as though it was not stopping fast enough for an emergency stop. But I did notice, as I looked over my shoulder, that there were tire marks on the asphalt. I tried this several times and it was very consistent and dependable. You can come to a complete controlled stop or you can let up at any time and resume normal operating conditions. You can even turn to avoid an object without fear of losing directional stability. It brought boring to a situation that should call for sitting on the edge of your seat.

Now for the front brake test. Squeezing the front brake until lockup is so counter intuitive to anything that you normally want to do. Curiosity overcame caution and I grabbed the front brake and squeezed it slowly until I could just barely hear the tire squeal. It was then that the ABS took over and controlled the situation as far as braking goes. Again, I could feel the brakes pulsing from the ABS unit and the tire never came close to break-

ing loose as you come to a controlled stop. I was able to steer without any effort. But again, it did not seem to be stopping the motorcycle very fast. One last test before I went to sand. I again sped up to about 60 mph and then applied both front and rear brakes to the max. Same thing happened. The ABS took control of the braking system, giving you total control with the ability to steer the bike or change directions without it being a hair raising experience.

I feel much better about the ABS system now. So I found a road that had sand washed across it from a recent heavy rain. First I tried the rear brake, then the front brake in the sand. Believe me; it is hard to apply the front brake in sand that's on the road. But I did and had total control at all times. I was even able to make small corrections while braking in the sand with the brakes on max. How scary is that.

My only concern about the ABS system is on clean dry pavement. It just didn't seem to stop fast enough. I was told by several people that should know, the ABS braking will out stop the same motorcycle with standard brakes. If ABS really works that great, how can you not pick this great option? One thing I would like to do in the future is test two motorcycles side by side, one with and one without the ABS braking. Anybody out there want to volunteer?

Summary

Harley has done it again. Great ride with great options and improvements. Make it a little faster for the highway and you should be good to go. Cover more ground with the new six gallon fuel tank and ride smoother with the fly-by-wire throttle. Surprisingly, I found the new isolated drive system to be a very welcome addition. I didn't think it would make much difference, but it did add to the smoothness of that magic carpet ride. I have no doubts about the ABS braking system, especially for the big touring bikes. If you ever find yourself on wet roads or come across sand or dirt on the road and you have to brake, this could be your savior.

Ride safe,

Kirk

www.phoenixbikers.com

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