

BMW Ride sneakers

By Wes Fleming #87301

Photo by Kermit Jackson #116619

I DON'T WEAR MOTORCYCLE boots. Ever. It's not like I'm riding around in flip-flops though, and I have a good reason for not wearing motorcycle boots. In May 1999, I was run over by a 78-year-old woman driving a Ford Taurus. I was on a Honda Shadow when it happened, and the car's bumper crushed my left foot, ankle and leg into the front cylinder of that beastly but beautiful V-twin engine.

Thanks to a skilled orthopedic surgeon and a sadistic but effective physical therapist, I was mostly back to normal in a couple of years. The only exceptions are lingering nerve damage and a misshapen mass of bone a few inches above my ankle. The placement of this bone mass and the

swelling it causes prevent every motorcycle boot I've ever tried on from closing around my lower calf. Since the crash I've worn work boots, combat boots, police duty boots and just about any other boot you can think of that isn't a motorcycle boot.

When I first checked out the new Ride sneakers from BMW, I was skeptical. When I tried on the left one though, I discovered that they top out just below my gnarled bone mass. When I found out I could get them in US size 14 (EU size 48), I ordered a pair on the spot, and I'm very pleased with the wear, utility and performance of my first-ever footwear that's certified for motorcycling use.

"Sneakers" is a bit of a misnomer. They're styled like basketball shoes, but they're certainly not sneakers, considering their ankle protection and reinforced heel and toe caps.

Also, their uppers are waxed suede and the sides and tongue are perforated to let air flow through. They're not waterproof, and I have been careful not to get them wet as I suspect doing so would damage their stylish good looks.

They fit like boots, but they wear like sneakers – light and airy. The sole has good grip on walking surfaces, and though BMW's literature calls the sole non-slip, that classification is only good for dry surfaces. If you walk through a puddle of water, you'll need to be careful for a few yards, and if you get motor oil on the bottom of them as I did, it's worth your time to wipe them off thoroughly before trying to walk on a tiled floor.

The heel, toe and ankle protection is nearly unobtrusive. If I didn't know there was ankle protection in there, I wouldn't believe it. The ankle protection is a combination of a plastic shell and a gel pad, which raises the comfort factor; the gel pad against your leg makes the side of the Ride sneakers feel that much more supportive. I can feel the heel cup most of the time, but it doesn't bother me – it lends a good deal of support when riding and doesn't create any hot spots or blister points when walking.

The Ride sneakers fit snugly, but order your true size unless your feet are very wide – and I mean very wide. I normally wear EE width boots, and as you can imagine, in a size 14 boot, that's a lot of boot. The Ride sneakers fit well out of the box despite my freakishly large, wide feet. I find them more comfortable to wear





with socks made of thin “performance” materials rather than standard cotton socks, but for everyday use, I loosen the laces and wear regular socks. The zipper on the inboard side of the shoe makes getting into and out of the Ride sneakers a snap – but because of the snug, supportive fit, you’ll need to be sure to untie them.

They are holding up well after 1,000 miles of use, and they ventilate so well that I’m not super eager for summer to end. I replaced the insole with a semi-customizable insole, but I do that with all my shoes as a matter of course. By doing this, I lost out on the anti-bacterial quality of the original insole, but I know from experience these aftermarket insoles will last the life of the shoes, so the slightly smelly trade-off is worth it to me. The Ride sneakers are comfortable for all day use both on and off the bike; I am up and down and around the shop most of the day and have worn them through my three-hour college lecture classes with no problems.

The contrast stitching is attractive, but not quite up to the rigors of the shifter on my R 1200 GS. The rubber tip of my Hammerhead shifter has discolored the left shoe, and I think the one major improvement BMW could make to the Ride sneakers is to affix a shifter pad. You may find that you need to alter your shifting motion when wearing these; they’re not as thick, top to bottom, as boots, so I found that simply flicking my toe up to shift wasn’t quite getting the job done. If it was May or June when I got these instead of August, I’d adjust my shifter, but as it sits it’s almost time to switch back to my usual boots for the fall and winter riding seasons.

BMW’s Ride sneakers are a good buy at \$199 (MSRP) – more expensive than the boots I generally buy, but more protective as well. Sizes start at EU 35 (US Women’s 4) and top out at EU 48 (US Men’s 14).

PROS: Light and comfortable; excellent ventilation; unobtrusive protection

CONS: Cheap (but acceptable) insole; could benefit from a shifter pad – for cosmetic reasons, not comfort/ease of use ☺



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