



Wunderlich handlebar muffs

By Wes Fleming #87301

IT MAY BE A STEREOTYPE THAT BMW riders are tougher than other motorcyclists, often riding through rain, sand, mud, sleet and even snow to reach their destinations across town or on the other side of the world. A hundred and two degrees out and headed through Death Valley? No problem. Five below zero and off to grandmother's house for Christmas dinner? NO PROBLEM! We all know a BMW rider who doesn't hesitate to mount up no matter the weather or temperature.

When it comes to winter, though, we should also all know that cold can kill, and it can do so quickly. It's important to not only protect the rider's extremities—fingers, hands, arms and toes, feet and legs—but to also ride with some measure of comfort. Every brain cycle spent thinking about those frozen fingers is a brain cycle that should be going towards operating the motorcycle and situational awareness.

Heated grips work well, but at highway speeds on a cold day, their effectiveness is minimal. Heated gloves can pick up the slack there, but that cold wind is still blowing past them at high speed, pulling the heat right off their surface. That's where handlebar muffs come in handy.

Wunderlich isn't the only company making handlebar muffs, and it may surprise some to learn that Hippo Hands isn't the generic name for these items. They all have the same basic purpose, which is to prevent the wind and rain (or sleet or snow) from even reaching the rider's hands in the first place. All the muffs similar to these Wunderlich ones do about as good a job as the others, but little details set Wunderlich's offering apart from the competition.



First and foremost is the clear plastic window that allows the rider to see both sets of handlebar controls. We all operate our motorcycles on muscle memory most of the time, rarely looking for the high-beam or horn button, but not being able to see those controls at all can be disconcerting to some riders. The windows in Wunderlich's muffs stay clear and pliable down below freezing, enabling quick looks to reassure riders where their controls are.

While Wunderlich's muffs might be a tad more fiddly to install than those made by other manufacturers, taking a little extra time to fit the opening over hand guards and around the mirror stalk and brake and/or clutch master cylinder is worth it. Once they're in place, securing them is simple, with a drawstring opening that closes as tightly around the handlebar as the rider wishes. The loose (and by now long) end of the drawstring secures to a clip inside the

muff and can be wrapped around the mirror stalk or something else to provide a slip-free installation.

Though the Wunderlich muffs work well and are durable and rugged, they may not fit every motorcycle. A GS with stock or average-sized hand guards in place is fine, but if you have extra-large hand guards on your bike, these muffs may not fit. Also, if your bike does not have handlebar-mounted mirrors, the muffs may obstruct your view of the rearview mirrors. Fortunately, if either of those things applies, a quick call to Wunderlich's customer support number can get you squared away with a refund or suggestions for alternatives. Because the muffs are semi-rigid, you don't have to have a GS to use them; Wunderlich says they made these muffs with BMWs in mind, but they should work on a wide variety of motorcycles of any marque.

The hand opening is not adjustable, but once you get the hang of inserting your hands into the opening, it comes to you easily on repeated use. The opening is big enough to wiggle through for most folks, but not so big that large amounts of wind will seep through around your jacket sleeve.

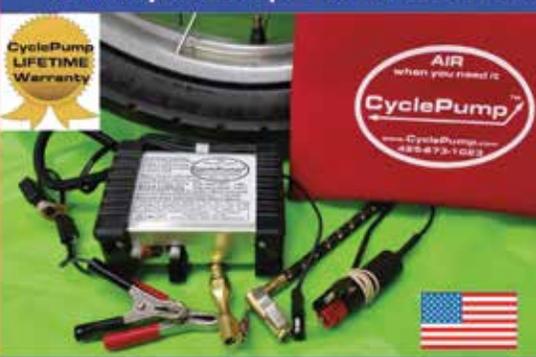
The big benefit of handlebar muffs is that you can get away with either using gloves with less insulation in them (for better feel on the grips) or, by using gloves with heavier insulation, you can ride in comfort in lower temperatures than you could without the muffs. Wunderlich's muffs have a light layer of insulation built in, which boosts their utility over muffs that are only wind and waterproof. They are well made, with quality stitching throughout and excellent materials. I expect to get many (cold) seasons of use from them.

Wunderlich Handlebar Muffs
Black, \$139.95; Hi-Viz, \$179.95
wunderlichamerica.com

PROS: Insulated, semi-rigid, windows to view the controls

CONS: A bit fiddly to install, may not work well on bikes with low-mounted mirrors ☹️

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