

Aprilia RST1000 Futura

Climb aboard the Futura and you'll find a bike that is initially... hard to use. Not difficult — everything is accessible and works well. But the clutch is noticeably heavy, as are the other controls including even the throttle and the buttons in the cockpit. The bike is even hard to get up on the centrestand. And this impression doesn't change when you're rolling. The handling is heavy, too, and cornering could almost be described as ponderous.

Up to a point.

What you need to do with the Futura is get used to it and discover the way it wants to be ridden, which is... well, hard as well. More like a sports bike, in fact. Then, all of a sudden, heaviness becomes surefootedness and the amazingly strong engine braking becomes a more elegant way of slowing for corners. Once you know what you're about, the Futura grows on you very quickly. You still need to work to get the bike into corners, but you don't mind any more. It's the kind of bike where you suddenly look down and realise you've covered a couple of hundred kilometres since you last checked.

Aha! This is a sports bike! The thundering vee twin helps a lot. That engine should almost be arrested for exhibitionism once it's spinning over about 2500rpm. It does nothing to hide its past as a sports bike mover.

But the Futura isn't just a sports bike. It is also a real tourer. The fairing is excellent, offering good protection from the wind at all speeds and in all circumstances that I encountered. The seating position and seat are comfortable for both rider and pillion, and the ergonomics are outstanding. Pity that we need to buy the panniers as accessories; in Europe they come standard. But then the bike would not have met the \$20,000 price point if it had been fitted with luggage.



The panniers are a slightly odd shape, to suit the bike's styling, but they work quite well. We found on the original model that they did let in a trickle of water under extreme conditions, but I suspect you could set them up to eliminate that. The bike does not have a rack, and the substantial grabrail would make it difficult to carry a bag of any size on the tail. It's easy and convenient to carry even quite a large tank bag, on the other hand, and that's a better place to carry weight anyway. The bike has an excellent touring range, too.

That they made the Futura work as a tourer is a real credit to Aprilia's engineers. The Futura is a very practical and comfortable mile eater for two. And you get a sports bike free! s