


# 1996 TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE

N-reg, 15,615 miles, race exhaust. £3499. On Yer Triumph, Aylesbury, 01296 632000.  CAP Green Book price for a typical bike £3250.

**R**ETRO bikes are getting pretty common and rightly so; impractical sportsbikes and rocketing insurance means competent back-to-basics machines make sense. There's plenty pretending to be defining 60s/70s Japanese icons and Brit iron from the Bonneville heyday but Triumph's Speed Triple apes the bad-boy performance tuning biking culture of the 50s and 60s café racers. And that makes it unique in the current market.

While the look is from the past, the technology is reasonably up

to date. At the bike's heart is Triumph's raw and roty 900cc three-cylinder engine. The engine's designers took cues from Kawasaki's GPZ900R but the finished product is a power plant with as much character as any Ducati. There's torque aplenty backed up by an appealingly raw feel.

The chassis was never cutting edge-sports when it was released but it's extremely competent – although the Speed Triple is slightly heavy and carries its mass higher than many machines. The frame is

a basic steel backbone affair – like Honda's Hornet – but it does a decent job, as does the whole of the bike.

In 1997 this incarnation of the Speed Triple was replaced by the alloy framed, bug-eyed T509 Speed Triple which was more sci-fi street fighter than café race. It was a better bike (and has been updated since) but had a different look. If you're after that classic anti-hero rocker syndrome with decent performance and reliability, the first of the modern Speed Triples is the only choice.

## RIDER POWER verdict

Not enough owners took part in last year's survey for accurate results.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	12v, i/c, triple, 855cc
Claimed power	88bhp @ 5500rpm
Claimed torque	80ft lb @ 4500rpm
Chassis	steel spine
Dry weight	208kg (462lb)
Seat height	78cm (31in)
Fuel capacity	25 litres (5.5gal)
Tyres	120/70 ZR17 front, 180/55 ZR17 rear
NO insurance group	14
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	
Top speed	133mph
Fuel consumption	32mpg



No digital nonsense here, sunshine.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR

### STARTER CLUTCH SPRAG

Several modifications performed under warranty. Check the service history to see if they've been done. A graunching noise when you hit the starter button is a sign of expensive (£500) trouble on the way.

### NEUTRAL LIGHT

Can stop working when the engine's hot due to a poor earth on the selector drum. Needs a full engine strip to fix but doesn't affect the bike in any other way.

### WARNING LIGHT SURROUND

The chrome version from the Thunderbird will bolt on if the brushed aluminium item's not sparkly enough.

### FORK SEAL

Left hand (as you sit on the machine) seal is prone to leaking due to the weight on it when on the the bike's on its sidestand. A dealer will charge about £115 to replace both if there's any oil seeping out.

### RACE BIKES

A one-make race series ran in the mid-90s. Look for cut down pegs, lock wired bolts, Triumph race exhaust, wheels chipped from numerous tyre changes and other signs of track use. Only buy an ex-race bike if it's cheap any you're clued up.

### FINISH

The crinkly black coating on the engine, swingarm and other parts lasts extremely well. But once it starts to flake, it deteriorates very quickly. Like most Triumph's the finish is tough and better than many rivals.

