



1952 Triumph Thunderbird Motorcycle

Triumph

£7,400



Description

650cc Triumph Thunderbird Motorcycle.

This 1952, 650cc Triumph Thunderbird is a classic pre-unit, sprung-hub model carrying the UK registration 478 YUT after being previously registered overseas.

Introduced in 1949 and produced in various forms until 1966, the Triumph Thunderbird 6T was developed as a more powerful successor to the Speed Twin, meeting growing demand-especially from the American market for increased performance. To achieve this, Triumph enlarged the original 500cc Speed Twin engine to 649cc (71 x 82 mm), creating what would become one of the company's most iconic motorcycles.

The Thunderbird made an unforgettable public debut at the Montlhéry circuit near Paris, where three standard-production machines were ridden 500 miles (800 km) at an average speed of 92 mph (148 km/h). Remarkably, each bike was ridden to the circuit and back to the Meriden (England) factory, demonstrating impressive reliability. The model later achieved lasting fame when Marlon Brando rode a 1950 Thunderbird in the 1953 film *The Wild One*, cementing its place in motorcycle history.

Visually, the Thunderbird embodied simplicity and purposeful design: a round headlamp set into a nacelle, a sprung single saddle, lightweight wire-spoke wheels, twin exhausts, and Triumph's signature clean lines. The machine uses a brazed-lug rigid frame paired with a telescopic front fork and Triumph's innovative sprung hub rear suspension. Although appearing rigid, the sprung hub houses internal springs offering up to two inches of travel-an early solution for rear suspension before swingarms became standard. Drum brakes are fitted front and rear.

Built for riders who wanted both style and performance, the Triumph Thunderbird became an instant success in the U.S. and remains one of the most recognisable classics of the 1950s. Today, early examples are treasured for their iconic look, robust engineering, and deep connection to post-war British motorcycling heritage.