

STI OUTBACK TIRES

New all-terrain shoes

By the staff of Dirt Wheels



◀ All Outlanders are a blast to ride. The stock tires on this DPS model are probably the machine's weakest link. STI's Outback tire was a great replacement for the stockers. They have a ton more traction and better braking. Plus, their six-ply rating will resist flats way better.

STI's brand-new Outback AT tire is an aggressive stock replacement that still rolls smooth and stays predictable. The V-shaped lugs have a small step on the back of them that keep them from bending under acceleration. Those steps help with braking too. ▶



□ Can-Am's Outlander 650 is a darn good machine. It's one of the best. Probably, though, its weakest link is its tires. The stock four-ply Carlisle meats are smooth-rolling and handle decently; they just don't have the same strength as the rest of the machine. Not many stock tires do. That's why the number one item people upgrade on a utility ATV is the tires. After our stock testing was through, a tire change was the first order of business so we could keep enjoying the fun Can-Am.

We chose to try out STI's latest tire on the Outlander, which is fittingly named the Outback. The Outback is a six-ply bias construction that is designed as an all-terrain tire with just enough aggression for mud riding and a flexible knobby that will work well on hardpacked terrain as well. Keeping the tire light yet durable was also a high priority of STI's development team. The tires weigh right around 20 pounds. These tires are the same height and only slightly wider than stockers. The semi-aggressive open lugs are situated in a tight V-shaped pattern with terraced steps on the backside for strength.

Speaking of strength, the tires are rated to hold 340 pounds up front and 420 pounds each in the rear. The 12x7-inch HD4 wheels are even stronger with a 1000-pound rating. STI set an MSRP of \$113-\$128 for the tires and

\$90 for each wheel. The kit price would be a little less at around \$850. You can save even more dough by calling a company like RockyMountainATVMC.com ((800) 336-5437) and get their discounts. Currently, the AT is also available in 25x8-12 and 25x10-12 sizes. The XT is available in 26x9-12 and 26x11-12 sizes.

Coming soon are 27x9-12, 27x11-12, 28x9-12, 28x11-12, 27x9-14, 27x11-14, 28x9-14, 28x11-14, 29x10-15 and 30x10-14.

ON THE TRAIL

The lugs on this set of Outback tires are 3/4 inches tall, which is about twice as tall as the knobblies on the stock Outlander tires. For serious mud riders, STI also carries an Outback XT tire with 1 1/8-inch-tall lugs. The HD4 wheels widen the Outlander about an inch per side, but the stock fenders still protect the rider from flying mud.

On hardpack, the tires roll as smooth as the stockers and grip way better. The 650cc V-twin engine in this machine likes the way these tires grab the dirt and propel it forward. Oh, and you can still roost and slide the machine around the corners for fun, but getting the machine up to speed in a hurry is what these tires do best. Cornering is precise, and the tires do not push or slide on off-cambers like most more-aggressive tires do.

What impressed us the most was the way the tires dug in under braking.

Most V-shaped lug patterns usually slide a lot under braking. Not these. When you grab a handful of brake lever, they dig into the dirt hard. You can probably give most of the credit to the steps on the backside of the lugs. They have multiple biting surfaces to help dig in. The fact that the tires weigh slightly less than similar-sized mud tires doesn't hurt, either.

THOUGHTS

You can tell the guys at STI put a lot of thought into these tires. They are a perfect stock replacement tire, with more aggressive lugs and a thicker carcass without adding a ton of weight. They roll smoother than we expected and stop better than most tires with similar lug patterns.

We took these tires over our normal torture-test trail, and all four of them came through with flying colors. They gripped as well on moss-covered rocks as they did on sand-covered hardpack. They are equally as predictable in loam and sand. For tacky or full-time mud riding, we would surely opt for the tall-lugged XT model, but for our drier conditions, these meats will do just fine. It's easy to say the Outback tire and STI's HD4 wheel make our Outlander even more fun to ride. □