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CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN & CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS



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AN EARLY INSIGHT INTO THE CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN & CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS

In October 2019, we invited a select group of journalists from the motoring press to experience the Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin & CRF1100L Africa Twin Adventure Sports for the first time.

This booklet contains clippings of what they had to say.

OVERALL THE HONDA DELIVERS ON ITS PROMISE AND WILL OFFER A STERNER TEST FOR THE GS – NOT TO MENTION BEING A CHUNK CHEAPER. ▀▀

FIRST RIDE

IT'S NEW BUT IS IT WORTH IT?

EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES

New Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports ES gets GS-rivalling tech

Since Honda relaunched their Africa Twin with an all-new model in 2016, the firm's flagship adventure bike has been left somewhat lacking in what is a fiercely competitive segment. An update in 2018 went some way to redressing the balance by introducing a 'big tank' Adventure Sports model alongside technical updates, however, despite impressive global sales that have topped 87,000 units so far, it was noticeably down on performance and lacking the tech boasted by its rivals. For 2020 a third generation has stepped up to the plate with more power, improved technology and a revised chassis. But does this latest incarnation of the Twin finally hit the mark?

More bang for your buck

The parallel twin has received an increase in capacity from 998cc to 1084cc through a 6.4mm longer stroke, boosting peak power and torque by 6.8bhp and 4.4ftlb respectively while also delivering increases throughout the rev range. While lacking the outright performance and theatre you get from BMW's ShiftCam boxer, Honda's parallel twin has certainly benefitted from a very welcome bit of extra pep without losing its overall feeling of refinement. It's not going to blow your socks off, but it is a definite improvement and fulfils a touring brief with few vibes, a good throttle connection and slick gearbox that is all helped by the bike weighing 4kg less than before.

Getting semi-active

Showa's Electronically Equipped Ride Adjustment (EERA) is linked to the six-axis IMU as well as stroke sensors and has three road settings (Soft, Mid, Hard) and an Off-road setting. Different settings are linked

● 'The engine has more pep but still feels refined'

to the four set riding modes plus two 'User ones', but you can't physically tweak the damping on the go. The shock's preload can be adjusted to solo, solo with luggage, two-up or two-up with luggage, but again you need to be stationary to alter it. On the road the system responds extremely well with a noticeable

difference in damping between settings and a feeling of compliance. While lacking any self-leveling function, it delivers a plush ride and is a worthy addition that is also beneficial when used during light off-roading. An Adventure Sports with conventional Showa suspension rather than the EERA is £1400 less.

Sitting comfortably?

The Sports' lowered seat height (dropped 50mm for 2020) and narrower waist makes it more reassuring at slow speed as your feet are planted on the ground. Its five-way adjustable screen and larger fairing gives noticeably more wind protection than the stock model's trimmed down bodywork and those under six-feet tall should be able to shelter completely behind it. It's an all-day comfortable riding position that allows you to see off its fuel tank's impressive range.

Bigger tank = more miles

Where the stock Twin has a 18.8-litre tank, the Adventure Sports' tank has grown from 24.2 litres to 24.8 litres. Honda claim it is able to deliver 58.8mpg and a range of over 310 miles. During our test ride on a variety of roads, we averaged 45mpg, giving a range of 250 miles until dry.

The costs...

A standard Adventure Sports is £14,649 OTR (the DCT version is £15,849) with EERA on the ES model costing £1400 extra (£1500 for the DCT model). A BMW R1250GS Adv is £17,860 with the Dynamic and Premium Package fitted and heated grips, which is £1811 more than a similar spec Honda. That's not a bad saving...



Scroll between power modes

More power and less weight equals more enjoyment



Riding modes include one for tackling gravel



● 'It's the one to go for if you want a mile-muncher'

MCN VERDICT

JON URRY FREELANCE ROAD TESTER

Out of the two Africa Twin models, the Adventure Sports is the one to opt for if you are a road rider who wants a mile-muncher and has limited interest in off-road. The new engine injects a welcome boost that while the lower seat and narrower waist mean it is less intimidating at slow speed and the electronic suspension delivers a plush ride quality. Overall the Honda delivers on its promise and will offer a sterner test for the GS – not to mention being a chunk cheaper.

Tech spec

100.6 bhp Power @ 7500rpm 77.5 ftlb Torque @ 6250rpm

240 kg wet (DCT 250) Mass 24.8 Litres Tank capacity

Front suspension Shows 48mm USD fork, fully adj with EERA Rear suspension Shows mono shock, fully adj with EERA

Engine 1084cc 6-valve SOHC parallel twin 850 mm Seat height 870 mm

Front brakes 310mm Twin wave discs, 4-piston radial calipers, Cornering ABS, switchable Rear brake 256mm Single disc, single-piston caliper, Cornering ABS Frame Steel semi-double cradle, aluminium subframe and swingarm

What it costs

£16,049 (£17,349 with DCT) On the road cash price

£219 (£229) PCP per month x36 Deposit £2001.97 (£3890.71)

£373 (£419) HP per month x36 Deposit £3501.51 (£3745.71)

FEAST YOUR EYES



Twin's new suspension tech

The EERA shock has 24 steps of spring preload that alongside the rebound and compression damping (front and rear) can be set to two 'User' settings or one of four pre-defined ones.



Lower seat for more confidence

The Sports' adjustable seat height has reduced to 850/870mm from 900/920mm, bringing it inline with the standard bike. The subframe is 40mm narrower than before.



Adjustable screen and more

Screen is adjustable to five heights and you get aluminium insert panels, rear rack and engine bash plate as standard on the Adventure Sports alongside heated grips and cornering lights.

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Dream



2020 HONDA CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS ES

THIRD TIME LUCKY?

With increased capacity and a major technology upgrade, Honda hope the heavily revised Africa Twin will finally outsmart BMW's pesky GS...

By Jon Urry Photography Zep Gori, Francesc Montero, Ciro Meggiolaro & Felix Romero Garcia

With 49,000 Africa Twins sold in Europe since they revived the model name for 2016, the CRF1000L has been a success for Honda. It's a slight case of good but not quite good enough, though. BMW's R1250GS continues to dominate the adventure bike market, and with a trickle of updates the Honda has felt a bit of a work in progress, especially with the hefty discounting (which has clobbered values of older bikes). So here's version three: the CRF1100L. With a bigger and more powerful engine, the new Africa Twin is slimmer, lighter, has optional electronic suspension and, crucially, is loaded with tech including an inertial measurement unit (IMU), a host of electronics and a super-fancy dash. Honda seem to have finally got the Africa Twin right. Well, almost... The updates have significantly enhanced the performance and ride of the Africa Twin Adventure Sports. Armed with a

Looks ruffy-tuffy, but
the new Honda is a
better on-road bike



Semi-auto DCT option is now smarter than ever



Base Africa Twin tank is 18.8 litres; AS version is a huge 24.8



Slim-busting off-road rally pegs are a £90 optional extra

tank that's six litres larger than the base Africa Twin, the previous Adventure Sports felt a little top heavy, and Honda have cured this by slimming down the bike's waist and reducing its seat height. In essence they admit the Sports is a long-distance tourer (confirmed by now having tubeless tyres) and made it more appealing to this market. The adjustable screen does a good job of sheltering the rider and the claimed tank range of over 310 miles (Bike averaged 45mpg on the test ride, so a realistic 250 miles) is on the money for seeing-off serious distance – especially when you consider the AS version also has cornering headlights, cruise control and heated grips. It's now safer too, the new IMU giving the 1100 lean angle-sensitive ABS and HSTC (Honda's traction control). And it all works.

On the road the Adventure Sports is a brilliant bike to ride. The capacity boost from 998 to 1084cc has given the parallel-twin engine a welcome bit of extra pep; it might lack the drama and outright power of BMW's ShiftCam boxer and your socks will still be in place, however this is a smooth and refined unit. A definite improvement. Vibes are minimal, the throttle connection is very good and the six-speed gearbox is slick. And if you go for DCT (dual clutch transmission), the latest version is now linked to the IMU. This means it knows what angle the bike's at and responds accordingly, banishing any questionable gear selection when on an incline or in a bend.

'On the road the new Africa Twin is brilliant. The upgrades and increase in capacity significantly improve performance and ride'

Having a slim 21-inch off-road-style front wheel raises no concerns in corners (the GS has a fatter 19-inch item), and as Electronically Equipped Ride Adjustment (EERA) fitted to this ES model we're riding, the Honda's ride quality is excellent. The suspension's damping is linked to the rider mode (there are four preset ones, plus two customisable User options). The system responds extremely well, with a noticeable difference in damping between settings and an overall feeling of compliance. While lacking any self-plush ride quality – and it's a worthy addition should you indulge in a little light off-roading too. Is it worth an extra £1400 over conventional suspension? I'd say so. It can't be altered on the go, and so you're a bit limited in how much you can tweak it once you've set off, but you quickly establish two 'User' settings that work. If you cover a lot of miles on questionable road surfaces it's definitely worth it – so that's basically anyone who rides in the UK...

Of course it's impossible to miss the swanky new TFT dash. This is a touch screen, stuffed full of data and features, and is lovely and clear to use. It's not perfect, though. Honda have decided the touch function should only work at standstill, and it suffers a hint of lag when responding to inputs from the button-happy 'bar-mounted controls. There are connectivity issues too. You can Bluetooth link

Faster, plusher, easier to manage, better equipped. That's a lot of ticks



2020 HONDA CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS ES

FANCY TOUCH SCREEN

The dull old LCD is gone, replaced by a 6.5-inch touch screen TFT – or a Multi Informational Display (MID) in Honda-speak. It's standard on both Africa Twin models and works with gloves (but not on the move). Incorporating Apple CarPlay, it's Bluetooth ready, can display sat nav and has a USB charging socket.

MUCHO ELECTRONICS

Four power modes, three engine braking levels, seven traction control stages, three wheelie control settings, four preset riding modes (plus two User modes), and rear ABS can be turned off. Oh, and the IMU means the rider aids are lean-sensitive. The electronics are altered on the touch screen which also controls the semi-active suspension and DCT.



CONTROLS

The Africa Twin's left-hand 'bar has a 'joystick' to allow access to the main display, along with a separate 'call answer' switch if you have a Bluetooth device fitted. The right-hand 'bar houses the cruise control (new for 2020) as well as the DCT mode selector switch. Heated grips are standard on the Adventure Sports.

LCD DISPLAY

A secondary LCD dash ensures vital information is always on display should you be using the main display for navigation (linked from your phone). You get a speedo, gear indicator warning lights and a neutral lamp.

THE ADDITION OF THE LATEST MEANS IT NOW CAN COMPETE WITH WHILE STILL BEING AROUND

ELECTRONIC EXTRAS AND GADGETS A GS IN TERMS OF TECHNOLOGY – £2000 CHEAPER.

2020 HONDA CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS ES

'The Africa Twin Adventure Sports competes with the R1250GS in terms of tech, while still being £2000 cheaper'

a phone, but to access Apple CarPlay you need both a physical link from phone to USB port and to have a Bluetooth speaking device connected (a condition from Apple). This means finding a place to secure your phone as there's no convenient cubbyhole, and wearing a Bluetooth earpiece even if you only want to look at maps and not make calls. It's annoying. You can't help but feel slightly let down by one of the new Honda's headline features – which is a shame, as the rest of the updates significantly enhance the Africa Twin Adventure Sports' performance and ride.

Despite their rugged appearance, adventure bikes are generally used as road tourers with few ever venturing far into the rough stuff. While Honda love to shout about their Africa Twin's off-road focus, for me the fact they've shifted the big-tanked Adventure Sports more towards road riding is a smart move. The addition of the latest electronic extras and gadgets means it now can compete with a GS in terms of technology – while still being around £2000 cheaper. Sure, the reality of the dash is a bit of a let-down, but the rest is hard to fault. Honda's new CRF1100L Africa

Twin Adventure Sports has matured into a serious contender for best in class. **BIKE**

NEW STEEL FRAME

All models have a redesigned steel frame that's 1.8kg lighter than before and has altered rigidity (the cross pipe is gone). The subframe is now a bolt-on aluminium unit and is 40mm slimmer than the old integral one. The aluminium swingarm is new – it saves 0.5kg and is based on the CRF450R dirt bike's unit.

ROAD OR DIRT BIAS?

The standard Africa Twin's focus has been moved more towards off-road and it has tubeless tyres; the Adventure Sports has tubeless tyres and its fixed screen is shorter than before so it doesn't interfere with the rider's vision. Seat height remains at 850/870mm (the Sports' is reduced from 900/920mm to match) and its 'bars are 22.5mm higher than before with knuckle guards as standard.

SEMI-ACTIVE SUSPENSION

The Adventure Sports can be ordered with Showa electronically Equipped Ride Adjustment, or EERA for an extra £1400. Linked to the IMU and using stroke sensors, it has three road settings (Sport, Medium, Hard) and an off-road mode, with the damping automatically controlled. The shock's spring preload can be electronically altered when stationary through four default settings covering pillion and luggage. An additional 'User' option allows fine-tuning the 24-points of spring preload available. EERA adds 2kg to the bike's overall weight.



CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS ES

SPECIFICATION	honda.co.uk
Contact	£16,049, or £17,349 with DCT (base Africa Twin £13,049 or DCT £13,949 with DCT; Adventure Sports £14,649 or £15,849 with DCT)
Price	PCP: £2841.97 deposit, 36 months at £219, £7480.81 optional final fee
Typical finance	8v SOHC parallel twin
Engine	92 x 81.5mm
Bore x stroke	1084cc
Capacity	six speed, chain
Transmission	100.6bhp @ 7500rpm (claimed)
Power	77.5 lb.ft @ 6250rpm (claimed)
Torque	steel semi-double cradle, aluminium subframe
Frame	45mm USD fork, semi-active damping
Front suspension	monoshock, semi-active damping
Rear suspension	2 x 310mm discs, 4-pot radial calipers/ 256mm disc, 1-pot caliper
Brakes (front/rear)	90/90-R21/150/70-R18
Tyres (f/r)	27.5" / 113mm
Rake/trail	1575mm
Wheelbase	238kg (248kg with DCT; base bike 226kg / 236kg)
Wet weight	850/870mm
Seat height	24.8 litres (base bike 18.8 litres)
Tank size	45mpg (tested)
Economy	130mph (est)
Top speed	red/white/blue, black/white (base bike: red, black)
Colours	November
Availability	9/10
Bike rating	

LONGER STROKE ENGINE

The SOHC eight-valve parallel twin has a 6mm longer stroke, taking displacement from 998cc to 1084cc. The cylinder head has been redesigned, throttle bodies increase in size, combustion chambers are altered, valve timing is tweaked and there's a new exhaust valve. Power climbs from a claimed 93.8bhp to 100.6bhp, with a 4.4 lb.ft boost in torque. The new engine is 2.5kg lighter as well.

DUAL CLUTCH TRANSMISSION

Accounting for 48% of European sales, the DCT on the Africa Twin still has Manual and Automatic modes, as well as an off-road mode, but now has incline and cornering detection. This lets it adapt its gear selection to suit the road and what you're doing – no more changing-up midcorner.

ANGLE SENSITIVITY

All models have a Bosch six-axis Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) as standard, which links to the ABS and traction control. As well as giving the Africa Twin angle-sensitive ABS and TC, it allows wheelie control and rear lift control. The IMU also talks to the Showa semi-active suspension and the DCT.



Honda claim they've sold 87,000 new Africa Twins worldwide since its re-launch in 2016. That's almost 500 Africa Twins leaving showrooms every week, or 63 every day... or 2.6 bikes every hour, night and day, seven days a week, for the last three years and nine months. If you parked every Africa Twin sold since 2016 nose-to-tail on the M1, the line would stretch from Toddington Services to Redgate corner at Donington Park. You could see it from space.

That's a lot of Africa Twins (although, rather ironically, Africa Twins are only sold in four out of 54 African countries, which says something about cultural appropriation).

No pressure on the new bike, then. Can the 2020 model, in its multiple variations and guises, have continued success in the face challenges from Yamaha's cheaper new Ténéré 700 at one end of the market, and BMW's revamped flagship R1250GS at the other? BikeSocial is at the launch of the new Africa Twin on the island of Sardinia, to find out.



So the new Africa Twin is as solidly chuggable as the previous bike, and thuds to the same 7500rpm peak and 8000rpm redline – but now with even more muscular intent. The 2020 also AT leaps off the throttle with a keener jump; it's so energetic it sometimes verges on being snappy, and the motor then pummels through its gear ratios at fair clip (gotta love the immaculate quickshifter and autoblipper £695 optional extra on the manual transmission bike). It's so rapid it gets into law-breaking territory in very short hors d'oeuvres. The 8000rpm redline and am-dram rev limiter are easy to bump into in the lower gears; a little more over-rev would be welcome. And despite a massive array of customizable engine tuning options, modulating throttle response doesn't appear to be one of them – and even in low-powered Gravel riding mode the Africa Twin sometimes catches me napping with its instantaneous power delivery. But when it comes to powering past Sardinian traffic in a hastily arranged overtake, the Honda always has the headroom to get the job done; the extra cubes are definitely noticeable and welcome.

Equipment

This is, perhaps, the most obvious list of changes for the new 2020 Africa Twin – and it's a big one so buckle up.

A central change for 2020 is the addition of a 6-axis IMU (Inertial Measurement Unit) – effectively, giving the AT complete spatial 'awareness' of the bike's dynamics in real time (six axes is one more than the Fireblade; I ask which is missing from the Blade – apparently it's the previous generation Bosch IMU that uses two gyros to calculate the theoretical position of the third; the Africa Twin knows all six at once).

The benefit of an IMU is being able to design electronic systems to better augment the riding experience, either with more performance or more safety. In the AT's case this means cornering ABS and cornering headlights (both as standard) – both of which add safety without reducing riding pleasure.

Next, an IMU allows the development of powerful control strategies – which, on an off-road bike, means potential for allowing limited degrees of rear-wheel drifting before intervention (perfect for semi-skilled off-road riders, ahem), as well as variable wheelie control, alternative braking ABS strategies, alternate engine braking control and, in the case of the Adventure Sport fitted with Showa semi-active suspension (see below), integration with damping settings to tailor suspension performance according to lean angle and/or braking conditions. And as a final bonus, it also means DCT algorithms can now include lean angles – meaning no more auto-shifting while the bike is cornering.



It's an extraordinarily long list of adjustability that can easily overwhelm and confuse – you know, all we want to know is do the mirrors work? But it's only by riding and owning an

THE NEW AFRICA TWIN BRAKES, TURNS, GRIPS, STEERS AND FINDS TRACTION WITH SENSATIONAL ALACRITY.

Africa Twin do the benefits of technology become apparent (or you can take my word for it). Some folk are happy to stick with technology where they are – and if you think disc brakes over drum brakes and radials instead of crossplies is where you're happy for bike technology to end, you can rest assured you can buy bikes like that for as long as you have air to breathe.

But the rest of us can instead enjoy the fruits of innovation – and, in the Africa Twin's case, that means hanging the back out in the dirt when you get the chance, relatively safe in the knowledge the IMU has you, should you wish it, in hand.

All that adjustability is worthless if you can't access it easily – or at least without thinking too hard – and this is where the AT's new, generous, bright, touchscreen, multimedia TFT dash comes in. With lots of display options, it's un-touchable on the move – so then you resort to a cluster of 15 (!) buttons on the left and another seven on the right. The left bar cluster is for general riding use – changing modes, changing trips etc – as well as swapping tracks when using the dash as a multimedia console (the dash can hook up to a phone via Bluetooth, with a USB charging port nearby, and run CarPlay so you can communicate via a headset with your mobile or listen to music etc).



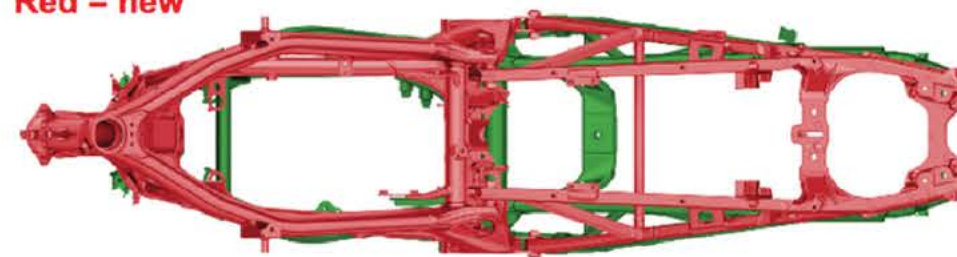
Handling: frame, suspension and weight

It's not often you hear a manufacturer claim to have deliberately taken rigidity out of a frame – but that's what Honda say they've done with the 2020 Africa Twin's steel double cradle, and blimey has it worked.

The aim was to get more feel for grip under steering and braking from the Africa Twin's front end which, apart from significant fork dive, was a... 'problem' is too strong a word; more like 'occasional mild disquiet'... with the previous model when you started properly tramping on,

on tarmac (riding in a way I suspect few owners would contemplate, to be fair). Such is the level of development tweakery we're at these days.

Green = old
Red = new



With the added weight saving of a new, detachable aluminium subframe instead of the previously welded steel item, and a new, CRF-inspired aluminium swing arm, a hefty 1.8kg was shaved off the frame package.



However, the result is an astonishing level of feel, augmented and supported, literally, by – on the flagship Adventure Sports – by Showa's first semi-active suspension system for Honda (they already make one for Kawasaki's 2018 ZX-10R).

The system uses direct suspension travel sensors (rather than pressure sensors, which require an extra calculation) to feed its own dedicated SCU (Suspension Control Unit). That then draws data from a table (rather than an algorithm) and also considers spatial data from the bike's IMU as well as dynamic vehicle data from the ECU in its calculations. And they're super-fast calculations – the first damping adjustment occurs within 0.015s of hitting a bump, or a dip, or whatever road irregularity is detected.

In practice you never notice the suspension change over a bump – it's effectively instantaneous. And the system is constantly updating the suspension settings anyway – so what you can feel is a plush, even, level ride when upright, and an astonishing level of support and feel delivered through the tubeless rims and Bridgestone A41s on the brakes and under power (rear preload is also electronically adjustable, but it's not self-levelling; you select the load range).



The new Africa Twin brakes, turns, grips, steers and finds traction with sensational alacrity.



Styling, ergonomics and comfort

There are lots of detail – and some big – changes to the 2020 Africa Twin's looks and riding position, but for many people the most significant alteration is that all three bikes now use the same seat height. Previously, the Adventure Sport model topped 900mm – which clearly put the bike out of reach (ahem) of a lot of potential customers. All bikes now come with 850-870mm seat height (with 825mm or 890mm low and high options when you buy the bike) – the seat itself is new; narrower than before at the tank, to permit easier access to the ground.

The result is where you sat 'on' the Adventure Sport, now – even with the seat on high – you sit 'in' it, very much behind the tank and screen. Which is also now five-way adjustable for height, using a pair of side clips to slide it up and down. It's not as convenient as Ducati's sash-window style one-handed screen, and even on its lowest setting the screen lip intrudes in my field of view – I'd rather have the short screen option from the base Africa Twin, but it won't fit the Adventure Sport.

Wind noise and head buffeting is a highly personal thing – even two riders the same height can disagree on the severity. But for me, the touring screen on the previous Adventure Sport was a head-rattling nightmare – it was better with no screen at all. This one is better; fully upright you can get completely behind it to minimize the disturbance. But the bike really needs side wind deflectors too – which are at least available as factory accessories.

The bars – ah, that lovely gold! – are a fraction higher than previously, and can still be rotated in the clamps for fine tuning. On road I'd struggle to think of a more immediately natural riding position – its promise of long distance comfort is immediate. Lots of leg room, the seat feels nicely compliant but supportive, and only a trace of engine vibes finding their way through the pegs (especially if you take out the rubbers for off-road riding).



2020 Honda Africa Twin brakes, wheels and tyres

One of the few items left from the previous Africa Twin, the new bike features the same radial four-pot Nissin calipers on 310mm discs – but now braking performance is augmented by a cornering ABS algorithm, made possible by the new IMU's computing power. Already as strong and powerful as you'd want on the end of forks with 230mm stroke and a 21in, 90/90 dual purpose front tyre, working in combination with the Showa semi-active suspension and Bridgestone A41 tyres, it's hard to overstate just how much braking force – and feel – can be transmitted back to the rider.



2020 Africa Twin Adventure Sports Verdict

Honda have clearly had a bit of a rethink about their positioning of the previous model Africa Twins; the idea of making the old Adventure Sport – ostensibly the tourer – harder to access with a taller seat didn't make a lot of sense. So by labelling the standard bike the more off-road orientated and the new Adventure Sports more road and touring based, the differences suddenly make sense. Bigger tank and taller screen with the option for wafty suspension on the tourer; lighter, sharper, keener base AT for trips off-road.

This also means the Adventure Sport, with its new-found electronics whizz, gets squarely into bed alongside the GS and flagship adventure bikes – at least in terms of spec and price, but albeit deficient to the engine tune of at least 35bhp. And the base AT is still the daddy among its peers; the BMW F850GS and KTM 790 Adventure – both great at their own thing, but neither anywhere near the AT on spec or, in the KTM's case, looks or build quality. Triumph's forthcoming Tiger 900 might have something to say about it, though – we'll have to wait to find out.

But in the short term (and I wouldn't bet against the long term either) I can't see any reason why the Africa Twin's success won't continue for at least another four years.

Three things I love about Honda's Africa Twin Adventure Sports

- semi-active suspension – the feel from the front end while cornering is astonishing
- looks – c'mon, it's the best-looking adventure bike out there
- spec level – cruise, heated grips, USB, 12v, Bluetooth, CarPlay, more settings than a royal banquet... you'll never get tired of messing about

THE HONDA ALWAYS HAS THE HEADROOM TO GET THE JOB DONE;
THE EXTRA CUBES ARE DEFINITELY NOTICEABLE AND WELCOME.

NEW BIKES

SITTING LOW

Honda has reduced the Adventure Sports' two-position seat height by 50mm from 900/920mm to 850/870mm, which is the same height as the standard model. Both bikes' waists are 40mm slimmer, reducing the stretch to the ground, and their sub-frames are now detachable.

RANGE EXTENDER

Where the stock bike has an 18.8-litre tank, the Sports has a 24.8-litre volume. Honda claims 58.8mpg and a range of over 310 miles but RIDE averaged 45mpg during the test, giving a realistic range of 250 miles.

BIGGER BANG

The parallel twin has increased in capacity from 998cc to 1084cc through a 6.4mm longer stroke, boosting peak power and torque by 6.8bhp and 4.4lb-ft while also delivering increases throughout the rev range.

FIRST RIDE HONDA AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS ES

Africa Twin comes of age

Does the 2020 Africa Twin's new technology justify its price hike?

IN A CLASS dominated by BMW's all-conquering GS, the Honda Africa Twin has acquitted itself very well since it was introduced in 2016. And now for 2020, with a new dash, upgraded electronics, a bigger capacity motor and a revised chassis, it looks like the third generation of Africa Twin may have finally come of age. But at a cost...

The addition of a six-axis Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) alongside a touchscreen dash and advanced electronic

assists isn't cheap and has seen the Africa Twin's price increase significantly. But you do now get cruise control (finally!), cornering ABS and traction control and that TFT dash as standard on all models with the Adventure Sports also adding cornering lights, heated grips and the option (at an additional £1400) of semi-active suspension on the ES version.

Interestingly, Honda has used the 2020 update to create a definite difference in focus between the Africa Twin and the

THE FACTS

Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin Adventure Sports

Cost £14,649 (DCT £15,849), ES £16,049 (DCT £17,349)

Engine sohc parallel twin, 4v per cylinder, i/c

Capacity 1084cc

Power 101bhp @ 7500rpm

Torque 78lb-ft @ 6250rpm

Fuel capacity 24.8 litres

Seat height 850/870mm

Wheelbase 1575mm

Weight 238kg (DCT 248kg) (EERA +2kg)

Rider aids Cornering ABS and 7-level cornering traction control, four power modes, 3-level engine braking, six riding modes, 3-level wheelie control, cornering lights

Adventure Sports. The standard model is now aimed at the off-road market and as such has a lower screen, tubed tyres and slimmer bodywork while the Adventure Sports is the mile-muncher.

As well as a larger fairing, the AS has a five-position screen (manually adjusted) that is tall enough to shelter the rider, tubeless tyres and a lower and narrower seat to help offset the intimidating feel you get on a tall bike with 24.8 litres of fuel sloshing around. And it works; where the standard bike noticeably lacks weather protection, the Sports is all-day comfy – especially with electronic suspension.

Although lacking any self-levelling function, the Showa EERA responds extremely well to road riding with a noticeable difference in damping between settings and a feeling of compliance that translates into a plush ride quality. Despite the skinny 21-inch front wheel, the front end feels reassuringly planted and the rear is equally compliant, a sensation enhanced by a revised chassis that is lighter than before with improved rigidity delivering sportier handling. If you cover a lot of miles on uneven road surfaces, EERA is probably worth the £1400 investment.

Although the parallel-twin motor has grown in capacity, bringing a boost in performance, it isn't a massive jump and while peppier, it still lacks the punch of BMW's ShiftCam boxer. It's a lovely smooth engine, and perfectly suited to relaxed touring, just not exactly thrilling.

Is this a bad thing? Not really; it mirrors the relaxed nature of the AS and in an off-road environment, is less intimidating. And the addition of the IMU, bringing with it angle-sensitive ABS and traction control, is a welcome safety net that only really

BEYOND THE HYPE

The bits that actually make a difference

Touch screen not touchy enough

The 6.5-inch TFT touchscreen display is standard on both models. Incorporating Apple CarPlay, it is Bluetooth ready, can replicate iPhone apps, has a USB charging point and can be accessed with a gloved hand. However, the touchscreen function is only available when the bike is stationary and you need to link in a Bluetooth headset as well as plug in your phone via a USB lead to access CarPlay.



It's got the best DCT yet

Where the old DCT system used to change gear at inopportune moments, the new version is linked to the IMU, allowing it to calculate and respond to gradients and if the bike is cornering. A major step forward in its performance, it is now excellent in both an on and off-road environment.



Semi-active suspension arrives

The Adventure Sports can be ordered with Showa EERA (Electronically Equipped Ride Adjustment) as the ES model for an extra £1400. Linked to the IMU and stroke sensors, it has four damping settings. The shock's spring preload can also be electronically altered when stationary. EERA adds an extra 2kg to the bike's weight.



Seat height on the Adventure Sports has been reduced to match the stock bike



makes itself known on gravel trails; not that many Africa Twins ever will and that's why I reckon the new Adventure Sports will outsell the standard model and give the GS a sterner test.

So, while the Africa Twin Adventure Sports is more expensive as a result of matching its rivals in terms of tech, we'd say it is a necessary sacrifice that has allowed it to evolve into what is now a thoroughly sorted adventure bike. **JON URRY**



While moving the stock bike off-road has compromised its road ride, the updates have

made the Adventure Sports a genuine adventure bike contender for mile-munching touring fans. The dash doesn't live up to the hype though. **R**

HONDA HONDA CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN | FIRST RIDE REVIEW (2020)

Visordown tests the new Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin DCT (2020) both on and off-road; Here's what we think of the lighter and more powerful Africa Twin.



After a day of riding around Sardinia on the fully kitted out Adventure Sports DCT ES, it was time to hop on the lighter, off-road-focused, CRF1100L. With its tubed nobbly continental tyres and rally styled bodywork, fun times were ahead. And plenty of powerslides too.

The majority of the day was spent off-road, where the new Africa Twin is right at home. So, that's what this review will focus on.

To me, the new CRF1100L harkens back to the original RD-03 Africa Twin, inspired by the NXR750 Dakar winning race bike. It has a focus and precision which is hard to not be won over by and is 5 kg lighter than before. Although, it's not lighter on your wallet...



Price

The CRF1100L is packed out with cutting edge technology which comes at a cost when compared to the previous model Africa Twin.

Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin – £13,049

Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin DCT – £13,949

Engine, transmission and exhaust

The reworked cylinder head, improved valve timing, throttle body and exhaust control valve [nicked off the CBR1000RR] enable 101hp from the 1084cc 270° parallel-twin engine. The torque sees a 7% improvement on the last model @105Nm.



The torque is smooth and consistent from idle right up to the redline. It's got a strong focused character with a couple of bumps of torque at 4k and 6k. And the joystick-like DCT triggers on the LH switchgear make the acceleration consistent and seamless. Like most parallel-twin motors the engine is silky smooth, and mega predictable off-road - great for technical and slippery trails where throttle accuracy is important. And great for whipping the tail out.

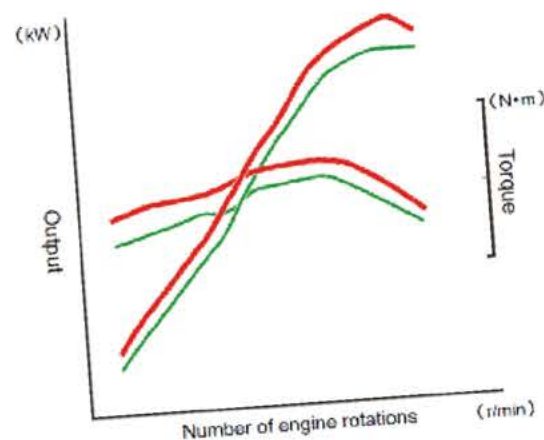
The DCT system, though massively improved [and linked to the six-axis IMU], felt a little jerky on very technical sections of trail, and required a dab of rear brake on pull away to smooth out the initial throttle input. It's not bad by any stretch of the imagination but could be slightly refined. However, if you're all about offroading then the manual variant would be a better option. If you're not an expert on the rough stuff, then the DCT system allows you to focus on the path ahead and not worry about simultaneously coordinating all four limbs at once.



IN SHORT, THE HANDLING IS SUPER COMPOSED. IT'S ALMOST A POINT A SQUIRT KIND OF RIDE, AND THE MORE RELAXED AND POSITIVE YOU ARE WITH CONTROL INPUTS THE BETTER IT RESPONDS.

WEBSITE: [Visordown](#) DATE: 14 Oct 2019

CRF1100L Africa Twin Adventure Sports
Previous model

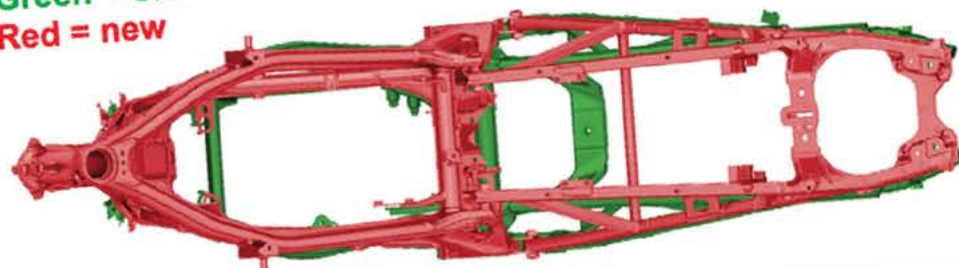


The exhaust note - thanks to the control valve - is delightful. It's got a deep bellow and sounded the dog's bollox as the guide riders ripped it up the gravel trails - rear wheel spinning, throttle pinned. Awesome stuff!

Chassis and Suspension

The semi-double-cradle frame has been modified to reduce weight and the new engine components and redesigned cases, the bike is 5kg lighter. The rear swingarm is inspired from the CRF450 MX bike in order to make the AT more nimble off-road.

Green = old
Red = new



The fully adjustable 45mm Showa Front suspension is plush and makes the bike feel connected to the surface. The rear fully adjustable Showa Pro-Link monoshock (with gas bottle) has 220mm of wheel travel. The suspension coped very well with the rough 'road' conditions, and the feeling the package provides to the rider is direct and reassuring. At no

point did the bike lack feeling or responsiveness. Which is pretty good going for a 226kg machine on gravel and dirt.

For more extreme Dakar styled conditions and jumps I can't comment on how the suspension would perform. Chances are it would be sweet as a nut though.

Handling

In short, the handling is super composed. It's nearly impossible to tie the bike in knots, impart due to the electronics and epic two-channel ABS system, but also down to the frame and suspension geometry. It's almost a point a squirt kind of ride, and the more relaxed and positive you are with control inputs the better it responds.



Off-road, rear-wheel steering becomes second nature, and on my brief time on the road, the Continental nobby tyres held up just fine. Granted, you can't ask too much of them - especially on corner exit at lean - but at non-competitive speeds, they are fine.

In my mind, the less you think about wanting to adjust suspension, preload, and rebound, the better. With the Africa Twin, I just wanted to get on and ride into the sunset. Whatever terrain is chucked in its path it just seems to calmly and efficiently overcome, and ask for more.

So. Much. Fun.

Brakes

At the front is a 310mm dual wavey floating hydraulic disc with two Nissin radial mounted 4-piston calipers. The rear has a large 256mm wavey hydraulic disc with a Tokico single piston caliper. Both front and rear brakes have a two-channel ABS system with cornering ABS. This system is one of, if not, the most refined system I've ever had the pleasure of using. Trust me, it saved my bacon countless times off-road and can be a reassuring assistant when the rider [me] is a little out of their depth.



Comfort and ergonomics

Off-road you hardly use the seat, although it's very supportive. The handlebars could do with tilting forward a few degrees to allow for a slightly more natural stand up riding position. And the rear brake lever needs to be lowered 5mm to feel natural in MX boots. Very small changes required - mostly personal preference.

In general, the Africa Twin is very comfortable and untaxing to ride, due to superb flickability and an empowering 90° upright seating position.

Equipment

The main improvements include a six-axis IMU which communicates with the 7 levels of Honda Selective Torque Control (HSTC), with four power levels and three levels of electronic engine braking. 3 levels of wheelie control has also joined the party.



Standard Equipment on CRF1100L

- 6.7" touch TFT dash and LCD lower panel
- 6 Axis IMU
- ABS and cornering ABS
- 7 levels of Honda Selective Torque Control
- Wheelie control
- Daytime running lights
- LED headlights and taillight
- Apple CarPlay + Bluetooth
- And more buttons than the space shuttle...

Riding modes

	Power	Engine braking	ABS	G Switch	HSTC	Wheelie
TOUR	1	2	On road	Not active (Default)		
URBAN	2	2	On road	Not active (Default)		
GRAVEL	4	3	Off road	Not active (Default)	Adjustable	Adjustable
OFF-ROAD	3	3	Off road	Active (Default)		
USER 1	1-4	1-3	On road or	Free to choose		
USER 2			Off road			

Navigation of these modes on the LH switchgear does take a while to get used to. To nitpick, the indicator stalk isn't obvious enough from the DCT gear selector either. Although I'm not that greatest at multi-tasking, so I can be easily confused.

The self-cancelling indicators aren't the greatest either, but you can turn off this function via the dash.



We love:

- Build quality and attention to detail
- On and off-road handling capability
- Electronics package
- Empowering riding position

We don't love:

- Indicator stalk design
- Dash takes too long to load
- Startup safety warning on touch screen each time bike is switched on



Honda CRF1100L Africa Twin verdict

The New 2020 CRF1100L Africa Twin is a sly beast. It's composed, accurate, and thoroughly enjoyable to ride. In the right hands, this bike would be an absolute weapon off-road and on the streets.

In short, the formerly outgunned Africa Twin has just gotten a whole load more bite. And, at the risk of sounding like I've developed objectophilia, I bloody love it.

Don't just take my word for it though, book yourself a test ride and see how you feel about it.

Test Ride

HONDA AFRICA TWIN AND AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS

AFRICAN REVOLUTION

Honda's stepped up its game for 2020, building on the massive success of its Africa Twin with the introduction of three new bikes – a new top-of-the-line, electronically assisted Africa Twin Adventure Sports, a standard Africa Twin Adventure Sports and a standard Africa Twin. And we've been out to Sardinia to see just how well they go on the road and the rough stuff.

WORDS: Ross Mowbray // PHOTOGRAPHY: Honda Europe

At first glance, you'd probably be forgiven for thinking that Honda's done very little to the Africa Twin for 2020. But you'd be wrong. Despite the quite subtle visual changes, they're completely new machines; all three of them. The headline news is that they're lighter, slimmer, more powerful and come kitted out with an eclectic mix of the latest technology. There's no doubt they are a serious step up from the previous generation machines. There's been a shift of priorities, too. The 'standard' Africa Twin now becomes Honda's out and out off-road adventure machine, while the Adventure Sports is all set for some serious touring – either with or without that new Showa EERA suspension system.

The standard Africa Twin will set you back £13,049 for the manual transmission machine, or £13,949 for the DCT bike. The base-model Adventure Sports will cost £14,649 for the manual, or £15,849 for the DCT. And finally, the electronically

assisted Adventure Sports is priced at £16,049 for the manual, or £17,349 for the DCT. So they're not cheap – but when you look at all the work that Honda's put into the new bikes, it's easy to see why.

We spent the bulk of our time on the new top-of-the-line Adventure Sports, covering close to 200 miles across a mixture of tight twisties, fast sweepers and wide, undulating gravel trails. As a result, that's the bike we're going to focus on. We will touch on the other two though, just in slightly less detail.

I'll come clean. I am a big fan of the Africa Twin. I was seriously impressed by the 2016 model when it was first introduced. I liked it even more when it was updated in 2018. And in spite of the Adventure Sports' gigantic seat height, I was a big fan of that, too. Now that's not to say I couldn't find any faults, but they made a lot of sense to me, sitting somewhere between the big behemoth 1200 and the slightly smaller middleweight 800. I loved their looks, their off-road abilities, and their heritage, too. In essence, I

thought the Africa Twin stood apart from much of the rest of the big adventure motorcycle market. It was a comparatively back-to-basics bike, in a field of seriously sophisticated and properly expensive metal. And I liked that. But after spending a full day covering close to 200 miles on the new flagship Africa Twin Adventure Sports, I realise I might have been doing the bike a bit of a disservice. I didn't like that it was comparatively simple – I liked that it's a bloody good bike. And with the addition of Showa's semi-active suspension and a range of serious updates, it gets even better.

Touted as a sports tourer rather than an off-road weapon, it's a massive step forward for Honda, and brings the Africa Twin Adventure Sports much closer to the big boys in the adventure motorcycle market. I'm thinking BMW's R1250GS, Ducati's Multistrada 1260 and KTM's 1290 Adventure. And this time it's lighter, more powerful, slimmer and easier to get on with. What more could you ask for?



Test Ride



Alongside the semi-active suspension, the headline news for 2020 is the bike's new engine. It's now a 1084cc unit, which is (a little bit) more powerful than the old one, kicking out 100.5bhp and 77.5lb-ft of torque. It's got plenty of power as far as I'm concerned – even though there's quite a bit less than its most obvious competition. There's more than enough in reserve to tank along in excess of a ton, and Honda has worked hard to make the power much more freely available right through the rev range from 2,500rpm. It pulls extremely well. There's some clever stuff going on to help achieve that, including a new cylinder head, a new throttle body with improved flow, new valve timing, and a new exhaust profile and exhaust control valve.

The suspension's the star of the show, though. Alright, so it's a fairly heavy bit of kit and it makes the bike significantly more expensive, but as soon as you ride with it, you'll wonder how you ever coped without. It's brilliant, helping the top-of-the-line Adventure Sports handle better than it deserves to. You can push the bike hard; really hard – and the suspension looks after you. It's a clever, clever system. It reacts to data gathered from stroke sensors and the new six-axis IMU. It adjusts the damping force depending on the

riding mode you choose (there's six of them by the way – Off-Road, Gravel, Urban, Tour, User 1 and User 2) – and you can even fine tune it using the left-hand switchgear (or the touchscreen TFT).

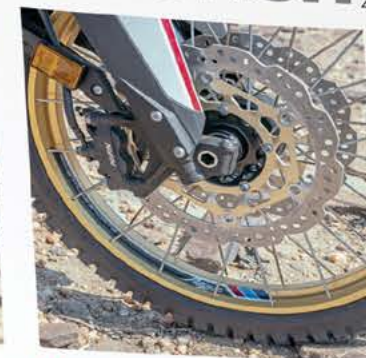
Let's back-track quickly, and talk about that new six-axis IMU for a minute. It's linked to the ABS and HSTC (Honda's traction control system) and works to offer lean angle-sensitive traction control, cornering ABS, wheelie control and rear lift control, too. There's a hell of a lot of flexibility built in. And it's not all that complicated a system to get used to. Within an hour I felt comfortable flicking between rider modes, adjusting traction control and

ABOVE: Despite its hefty weight and oversized dimensions, the new Africa Twin Adventure Sports really handles. Even with that big 21" front wheel, it never feels vague. Add the new Showa EERA system and you've got yourself a properly capable road bike.

turning rear ABS on and off using the touchscreen TFT screen. No problem. Off-road, it really comes into its own. Adjusting HTSC settings down from 4 to 1 let me break traction at the rear with increasing drama – and yet I never felt like I was going to get in trouble.

Interestingly, the brakes are pretty much the only thing that's unchanged from the previous generation bikes. While they're nothing hugely revolutionary, they're more than up to the job; smooth and progressive, but with enough bite to halt you in a hurry.

I also got a chance to see how well the new DCT system performs – switching bikes halfway through the



LAUNCH

day. Now, I've never really been a fan of the DCT on the Africa Twin. I understand the advantages (and I loved it on the Gold Wing and VFR1200X), but in the past I've found it a little counter-intuitive. It'd change gear when I didn't want it to, and I would end up using the up and down paddles which, as far as I'm concerned, sort of defeats the purpose of having it, particularly when you've got to fork out more cash for the privilege. Sorry Honda. Equally, 40 per cent of Africa Twins have been sold with the Dual Clutch Transmission since 2016, so who am I to knock it? If it works for you, it works for you.

That's not to say the new and improved DCT set up isn't better than before. I think it is. It's now linked into the bike's riding modes, so as you change between Tour, Urban, Gravel, Off Road and User 1 and User 2 the DCT adjusts the gear ratios. And off-road, I actually started to see the benefit. It's just one less thing to worry about.

If you really need to shift gears, you can simply tap the up or down paddles and away you go. If you're a less experienced off-roader, I'm fairly confident in saying it'd help you tackle more challenging terrain than if you were on the manual model. Saying that, I did still prefer the manual, but

ABOVE: The Africa Twin's new TFT touchscreen display is a massive step up from the outgoing bikes. It's a lovely thing to behold – clear and easy to read, with a mass of information available at your fingertips. And for the iPhone fans out there, it comes with Apple CarPlay as standard.

Specification

AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS

Engine: 1084cc SOHC liquid-cooled 4-stroke 8-valve parallel twin with 270° crank and Uni-cam

Max. Power Output: 100bhp (75kW) at 7500rpm

Max. Torque: 77lb-ft (105Nm) at 6250rpm

Fuel Tank Capacity: 24.8L

Clutch Type: (MT) Wet, multiplate with coil springs, aluminium cam assist and slipper clutch (DCT) 2 wet multiplate clutches with coil springs

Transmission Type: (MT) 6 speed manual (DCT) 6 speed

Frame: Semi double cradle

Wheelbase: 1575mm

Seat Height: 850/870mm (low seat option 825mm, high seat option 895mm)

Ground Clearance: 250mm

Kerb Weight: (MT) 240kg (DCT) 250kg

Suspension: (F) Showa Telescopic inverted fork with an inner tube diameter of 45mm, and Showa EERATM with compression and rebound damping adjustments, 230mm stroke (R) Monoblock aluminium swing arm with Pro-Link with Showa gas-charged damper, hydraulic remote control preload adjuster and electric control unit with compression and rebound damping adjustments, 220mm rear wheel travel

Wheels: (F) 21M/C x MT2.15 wire spoke with aluminium rim (R) 18M/C x MT4.00 wire spoke with aluminium rim

Rims: (F) 21in (R) 18in

Tyres: (F) 90/90-21M/C 54H (tubeless type) Bridgestone Battlax Adventurecross Tourer AX41T (R) 150/70R18M/C 70H (tubeless type) Bridgestone Battlax Adventurecross Tourer AX41T

Brakes: (F) 310mm dual wave floating hydraulic disc with aluminium hub and radial fit 4-piston callipers and sintered metal pads (R) 256mm wave hydraulic disc with single piston calliper and sintered metal pads. 2-Channel with rear ABS off mode

ABS System Type: 2 channel with IMU/Selectable ABS MODE with on-road and off-road setting

Contact: www.honda.co.uk



IF YOU'RE A SERIOUS OFF-ROAD RIDER, YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT WHAT THE BIKE'S CAPABLE OF DOING.

Test Ride

AROUND THE WORLD ADVENTURER

ALL-DAY COMFORT

When you're in the saddle all day, day after day, the little things can make all the difference. And Honda's really thought about that when re-designing the Africa Twin Adventure Sports. There's a larger fuel tank, improved wind protection from the front fairing, a height-adjustable screen, heated grips, cruise control, a couple of charging sockets – and even some new cornering lights, which automatically illuminate corner blind spots depending on speed and lean angle.

OFF-ROAD PROWESS

Despite its sport touring credentials, the Africa Twin Adventure Sports is still a seriously capable off-road machine. With its bash plate, CRF450R derived bolt-on aluminium subframe, 21-inch front wheel and tubeless tyres, there are few places this bike won't be able to go.

MORE POWER

Honda's upped the ante for 2020, increasing power and torque right through the rev range. The new 1084cc parallel twin-cylinder motor now kicks out 100.5bhp and 77lb-ft of torque. Granted, it's not a massive increase, but it's enough.

SHOWA ELECTRONIC SUSPENSION

You can enjoy optimum suspension, all the time. The top-of-the-range Africa Twin Adventure Sport's Showa EERA

manages damping force, depending on your choice of rider mode. A dedicated ECU draws real-time information from front and rear stroke sensors, IMU and Cornering ABS to know exactly what settings you need – and it even lets you adjust rear spring preload with the press of a button (or a tap of the touchscreen display).

TFT TOUCHSCREEN DISPLAY

For the first time, the Africa Twin gets a proper full-colour 6.5-inch TFT screen. And it's a touchscreen at that. When you're stationary, you can tap tune) riding modes. It also offers intuitive control of the smartphone-system. It's also got Apple CarPlay built in to allow mirroring to your phone.

CUSTOMISE YOUR RIDE

The Africa Twin's sophisticated electronics offer a huge amount of customisation to ensure the bike's set up for the riding you're doing. There are four default riding modes: Tour, Urban, Gravel and Off-Road – plus two customisable USER settings. You can dial in HSTC (levels 1-7 and off), Wheelie Control (levels 1-3 and off), and turn off ABS at the rear wheel. And if you go for the DCT version, you can change the DCT S mode shift pattern, too (levels 1-3).

LAUNCH

"Taking a step back and looking at how we could appeal to a wider range of customers, we felt that it would make more sense to have a clearer difference between the Africa Twin and Africa Twin Adventure Sports. That's why we focused on the big tank bike being a long-range tourer, and the smaller tank bike being more clearly focused on off-road."



Kenji Morita
Honda Large
Project Leader

you're on the move. Likewise, I'm not entirely convinced by the left-hand switchgear, which controls the TFT screen when you're on the move. It's fine when you're stationary, because you can make use of its touchscreen capabilities. It's a shame, because the screen's a great thing to look at, and it offers a huge range of information when you compare it to the previous models – I just found it too difficult to navigate. Then again, I found it easier to use than the system on the

BMW GS – and I'm sure if it was your bike, you'd quite quickly get to grips with it and have no trouble switching things up on the fly. Additionally, I didn't really get on that well with the self-cancelling indicators. That's not Honda's fault. I've tested them on a wide range of bikes and have always found that they tend to find they cancel a fraction too early. Thankfully, you can turn them off by messing around with the settings without too much trouble.

HONDA AFRICA TWIN

While the Adventure Sports was previously Honda's hardcore off-roader, this time the standard Africa Twin's the one that's ready to hit the trails. It's much the same as the top-of-the-line Adventure Sports, but instead of semi-active suspension, you get knobby tyres.

Quite often on launches you get to ride a 200-metre stretch of flat fire trail to test a bike's off-road abilities. Not this time. We got a chance to put the new Africa Twin through its paces on a decent enduro loop. I went around twice – once on the manual, and once on the DCT. Admittedly, it wasn't overly technical or tight, but it was challenging enough for me, with a mix of wide, open trails, tight switchbacks, climbs and downhill sections across sand, gravel and rocks.

The Africa Twin's new 6-axis IMU was the real highlight. It was working overtime. I'm no off-road

god, I'm just about competent, but the electronics helped me push harder and harder as the day went on. I had a couple of really quite sketchy moments where it felt like the front end was going to wash out on loose gravel and sand, and somehow I managed to stay up.

Overall, I was seriously impressed with Honda's newest off-road ready Africa Twin. It's agile and unimposing, and yet when you want to have a bit of fun, a blip of the throttle and a tweak of the HTSC settings mean you can get the back end sliding around like a pro. If you're a serious off-road rider, you'll be amazed at what the bike's capable of doing. And if you're an average off-roader who likes to tackle the occasional trail, the Africa Twin will help you get a real wriggle on. It's also the cheapest of the bunch, coming in at £13,049 for the manual model and £13,949 for the DCT.

that's a personal preference. Honda's also listened closely to customer feedback when designing the new Africa Twin Adventure Sports, so for 2020 there are a couple of key changes, including the addition of cruise control and a significantly lower seat height. It's now the same as the standard Africa Twin, a much more manageable 850/870mm. Credit where credit's due. The fuel tank's a little bigger too, up from 24.2 litres to 24.8 litres. Honda reckon it'll return just shy of 60mpg and help you cover in excess of 300 miles from a single tank. I didn't quite get that. I managed close to 45mpg, which would mean I'd have managed around 250 miles without filling up, which isn't too shabby.

To be honest, there's very little to criticise about the new Africa Twin Adventure Sports. Ok, so maybe the manually adjustable screen is a little bit of a disappointment. When you're paying top whack, you'd probably expect an electric one – or at the very least one that can be adjusted while



Test Ride

SHOULD I BUY ONE?

I'm seriously impressed with the new Africa Twin Adventure Sports with Showa semi-active suspension. Yes, the price is a big step up from the previous models, but there's some serious work and serious technology involved in making the bike a top-quality bit of kit. It's a Honda, so the build quality is second-to-none. It's 5kg lighter, a little more powerful, slightly slimmer and is significantly more manageable, thanks to that much lower seat height. It comes with cruise control, heated grips, multiple charging points – and that new Showa suspension and six-axis IMU are brilliant. It's a joy to ride, inspiring confidence no matter whether you're blasting down B-roads, tackling trails or breezing past traffic in town. In short, if you like the 'old' Africa Twin, you'll love the new one. I'm sure of it. You'll just have to stomach the price increase.

So that's it. Two days, six bikes – and I loved every second. If I had to pick only one of them to go in my garage, which would it be? I

don't know. They each do different things very well. If I was after a serious off-roader, that'll do big miles in comfort, I'd be very tempted by the standard Africa Twin. If I wanted a sport tourer to traverse continents and tackle a bit of off-road on the way, it'd probably be the standard Adventure Sports. And if I wanted to go all out and spend some serious cash on a bike that's super-agile on the road, but would handle some tricky trails without a problem (and has suspension that's adjustable with the click of a button, which is monitoring your every move to ensure you get the best performance at all times), it's going to be the top-of-the-line Adventure Sports. The best way to decide which is the one for you would be to ride them. And thankfully, you won't have to wait too much longer to try them out for size, because they're set to arrive in the UK by the end of November. I know I'll be getting my hands on them as soon as I possibly can.



THE AFRICA TWIN'S NEW 6-AXIS IMU WAS THE REAL HIGHLIGHT. IT WAS WORKING OVERTIME. I'M NO OFF-ROAD GOD, I'M JUST ABOUT COMPETENT, BUT THE ELECTRONICS HELPED ME PUSH HARDER AND HARDER.







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