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NEW!

1100 AFRICA TWIN RIDDEN

More power, more tech. It's a GS nightmare



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

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 the 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



Semi-auto DCT option is now smarter than ever



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



Shin-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.

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 before the Africa Twin steers well. And with Showa's fancy-titled 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-levelling preload function, it delivers a 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

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

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

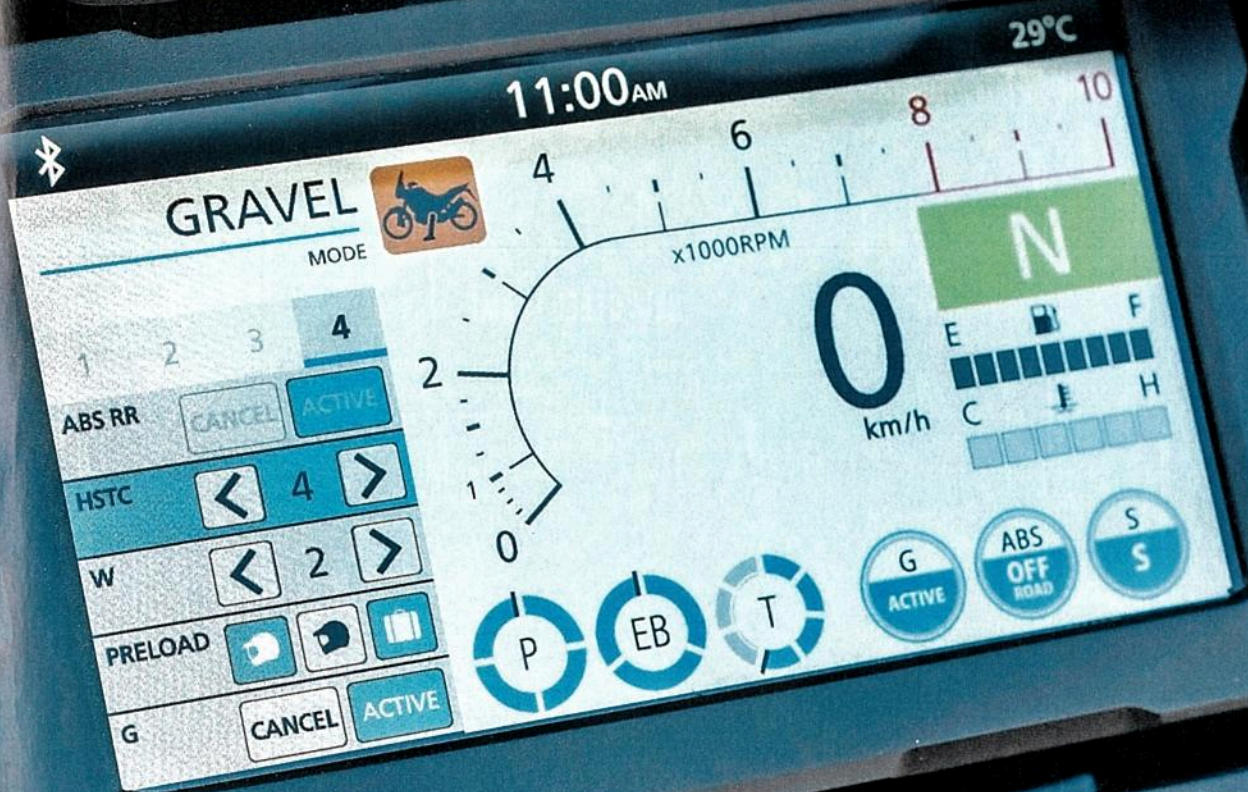


FANCY TOUCH SCREEN

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.



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.

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.

'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**

ROAD OR DIRT BIAS?

The standard Africa Twin's focus has been moved more towards off-road and it has tubed 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.

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.

SEMI-ACTIVE SUSPENSION

The Adventure Sports can be ordered with Showa electronic semi-active suspension (known as 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 pillions 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.



SPECIFICATION **CRF1100L AFRICA TWIN ADVENTURE SPORTS ES**

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



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.