

LOOKING FOR ADVENTURE

The new CCM GP450 is a fresh slant on the traditional adventure bike, we go to Wales to see where it fits in

Honda CRF250L
£3999/23bhp
Steel frame and friendly
249cc single-cylinder en-
gine, the Honda's a sheep
in wolf's clothing

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The new GP450 is big news for CCM. It's a bold step for the small Bolton firm and marks a move away from their off-roader roots. With the GP450, CCM is placing a firm foot on the popular adventure bike bandwagon, but instead of following the crowd with a 1200 twin, the company is bravely going its own way with this Dakar Rally-inspired

WHAT'S THE STORY?

■ Britain's own CCM has joined the adventure bike market with this radical, new Dakar-inspired 450cc single. MCN had a first taste of the prototype towards the end of last year and now the production bike is ready it's time to find out where it fits in. So we pitted it against the bigger Yamaha XT660Z Ténéré and smaller Honda CRF250L trailie in North Wales to find out.

450cc single – a machine they believe will offer riders 'real-world' adventure capabilities and exceptional off-road prowess. But what can the £7999 GP450 offer that its single-cylinder contemporaries can't for less?

To find out, we've put it against two dual-purpose singles that we have plenty of adventure experience with – the smaller and lighter £3999 Honda CRF250L trail bike and the £6999 Yamaha XT660Z Ténéré. Our destination? The glorious Snowdonia National Park in Wales, on a trip that includes high speed motorways, twisty A and B-roads and a significant section of off-road thrown in too.

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SEE THE VIDEO

Want to see and hear these bikes in action? Then check out our exclusive video by downloading MCN's digital edition www.greatmagazines.co.uk/mcn

CCM GP450
£7999/40bhp
Handmade high-tech aluminium frame and a chassis loaded with top-quality parts

Yamaha XT660Z
£6999/47bhp
The big bike of the group has plenty of torque, as well as genuine high-mileage touring comfort



Snowdonia has the perfect mix of Tarmac and trails for our small-capacity adventure bikes to tackle



“The national park brims with Tarmac turns and off-road twists begging to be ridden by bikes with knobbly tyres’

Andy Davidson

Small, but perfectly formed

Snowdonia is a perfect testing ground for these machines. The national park brims with Tarmac turns and off-road twists – interlacing the idyllic countryside just begging to be ridden by bikes with knobbly tyres.

As Tarmac was up first, fellow testers, Liam and Simon, scrambled for the CCM and Yamaha, so I threw a leg over the trusty Honda CRF and gave chase. Every time the road opened up the 250cc Honda’s meagre 23bhp was left wanting, leaving an even bigger gap between myself and the others.

That said, the little Honda is remarkably easy to ride. The aggressive, motocross styling is only skin deep. It does away with the chunky aluminium frame of its full-blown motocrosser CRF250X sibling and employs a cheaper steel one instead, combining it with a more softly-tuned engine.

Derived from that of the CBR250R, the liquid-cooled single has been tweaked to produce slightly more

torque and bottom end power. As a result its delivery is progressive and predictable. There’s nothing wild, lairy or particularly exciting about it. Instead it’s a solid, reliable bike that gets you pretty much wherever you need to go. It’s a road bike first and a trail bike second but that said, after an hour my arse began to ache. Even so, the CRF easily raised a smile and I was more than happy to just potter along.

All grown up

The Yamaha XT660 Ténéré’s 410cc advantage makes a huge difference on the road, almost rendering it incomparable with the CRF. Its Tarmac-going abilities are often unfairly disregarded, as it’s more than capable and can sit at 90mph all day long. The Yamaha’s screen does a good enough job and the extra bulk gives the ride a planted feeling. Scything through Snowdonia’s mountain roads on the Ténéré is easy and fun, especially as the bigger lump packs enough torque to punch out of

TWO MINUTES WITH:



AUSTIN CLEWS, CCM DIRECTOR

“We’ll appoint a minimum of 10 UK dealers by April 2014. Each of them will be able to offer a full back-up service and spare parts. We’ll also be able to service bikes and mail order parts, including engine components, in our Bolton factory with next-day delivery. We also offer a 12-month warranty.

“One of the great things about these bikes is that they are all hand-built here in the UK, so you can actually speak to one of the chaps that built your bike. Not many firms can say the same thing.”

tight corners when needed. It’s also the most comfortable, the commanding seat height lending extra road presence.

The Ténéré is also the oldest of this bunch. The name has been around two decades but this 660cc water-cooled incarnation arrived in 2008. As a result it can feel a little old tech at times, but you could argue that at least it is tried, tested and dependable so shouldn’t let you down.

Instead, the main drawback overall is the Yamaha’s weight. The 215kg, gained in part due to the extra cubes, engulfs the competition and riding the others only compounds how unnecessarily heavy the Yamaha is. If it was mine I’d put it on a strict diet before a long journey, starting with a 2-into-1 exhaust conversion.

New kid on the block

Jumping on the CCM after riding the heavyweight Yam and low-powered Honda is like entering a new world. Instead of a short trail bike with mini-

mal road presence the GP is more like an enduro bike in adventure clothes. And on steroids. Twist the throttle and the CCM’s BMW G450X motor delivers a restricted 40bhp at 7000rpm – more than enough for mountain twisties, and only 6bhp less than the 660cc Ténéré. CCM also offer a full engine power ‘plug’ for £49.99, which raises the rpm restriction and ups peak power to a tempting 52bhp. The trade-off is reduced mpg, shorter service intervals and voiding the one-year warranty.

The extra go makes the CCM far more exciting than the Honda. Its throttle is sharper and more responsive and yet the whole package works perfectly; the twin-pot Brembo brakes up front and single-pot rear are sharp enough to progressively halt proceedings while the suspension could handle anything we threw at them.

Instead, my main gripe was the intrusive vibration felt through the GP’s pegs at high speed. CCM blame the frame’s rubber mounts and say it’ll



CCM's high quality suspension gives confidence even on the loose stuff



Mud, ditches and big sharp rocks - nothing gets in the way of our testers

be corrected before the model goes on sale in March, but it left me pondering if the new CCM could perhaps do with a sixth gear, or a smaller rear sprocket than the 47 tooth it's currently running. The other annoyance is the flick-up sidestand. While it might be fine off-road, it's quite frustrating on a day-to-day basis.

Down and dirty

After the mountain twists we were all itching to get onto some muddy trails so headed an hour south from Beddgelert to Dolgellau to embark on the second half of our test. It was instantly clear which bike was most at home in the dirt. After hours of thick mud and jagged rocks, chopping and changing bikes as we went, it was always the CCM's keys that were most in demand. The 450 is by far the most focused machine of the bunch and its entire set-up caters specifically for getting the best out of the rough stuff.

Quality components such as fully-adjustable Marzocchi forks and rear Tractive shock came into their own: smoothing over our mistakes and absorbing the rocks strewn across our path. The high Renthal bars relieved wrist pressure (unlike the low bars on the CRF) and the riding position was perfect. The GP is 3kg lighter than the CRF and a whopping 74kg less than the Ténéré. The CCM is also incredibly agile and its responsive throttle, so enjoyable on Tarmac, is even more of a blessing off-road. It leaves the Ténéré and CRF trailing behind.

However, that's not to say the other two can't handle the mud. They are just softer and less likely to catch you out. The CRF, for example, looks the part but despite its motocross styling is incredibly easy to ride making it a



An adventure bike for adventurous people. The GP450 is easy to ride and beautifully made

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After hours of thick mud and jagged rocks, it was always the CCM's keys that were most in demand”

Andy Davidson

great novice-friendly machine. The Honda motor pulls effortlessly and smoothly and only gets out of shape when trying to keep up with the CCM.

The Dakar-inspired styling of the Ténéré also looks purposeful, but the Yamaha is also quite relaxed off-road. Even though the Yam has the most power on paper, the CCM still feels like it has more because of how light it is, and its sharp throttle response. The Ténéré's suspension is on the soft side, you'll feel a rapid dive when loading the front, and its weight doesn't help. But in isolation, and as long as you keep away from particularly demanding terrain, the Ténéré is a rewarding ride.

Price

£8000 for a single-cylinder 450cc? Are you mad? Yes, the CCM's asking price is high - but it's a hand-built, made in Britain, beautifully spec'd machine, and in the context of 'proper' enduro bikes (such as KTM's £7349 450 EXC), it's understandable. The GP450 strikes

a unique balance of road and off-road ability, more than any dual purpose rival. CCM further justify the price by loading it with quality, top-notch components such as the 'Bond-Lite' chassis - a bonded aluminium frame - which the firm claims is a world first for production motorcycles.

So who's it for?

The growth in popularity of the adventure bike has corresponded with a growth in their size and weight - BMW's latest R1200GS Adventure is gargantuan.

While that's fine for long-distance mile-munching, it's not so great for heading off into the wilderness. For most of us, the thought of whacking one of the latest 220kg Goliaths through a forest is incomprehensible.

This is where CCM's little 450 fits into the adventure world. CCM has clearly put a lot of time and effort into the GP's off-road ability by using a lightweight chassis and high quality, fully adjustable suspension. In fact, to buy this bike and not venture off-road would be like buying a microwave oven to store your cutlery in!

The CCM is an exciting machine for anyone thinking of undertaking a long journey and the firm entices would-be buyers further with an extensive range of aftermarket accessories from hard and soft bespoke luggage systems and specialist storage containers, to adjustable screen mounts, centrestands, spotlights, guards and even electronically-adjustable rear shock kits.

Buyers can choose between an optional 890 or 960mm seat, and there's even the choice of an extra low suspension set-up, which drops the standard seat height to 790mm.

Continued over



Light, fun and easy to ride but the Honda CRF250 struggles through lack of power



A comfortable riding position and of torque means the Ténéré eats miles



VERDICT

ANDY DAVIDSON,
STAFF WRITER

The best of both worlds

If you're not going to ride off-road a lot the GP450 isn't the bike for you. CCM is offering customers a machine capable of long distance travel yet one that has serious off-road credibility. And that potential to go off the beaten track - and do it exceptionally well - is the CCM's biggest selling point.

While both the Honda and Yamaha are perfectly competent, they're not in the same league. Both are primarily road bikes with off-road abilities while the CCM strikes a closer 50/50 balance.

That's why the CCM wins this test - it truly is the best of both worlds. For long road miles with the odd fire track, take a Ténéré. It's versatile, robust, and works well on road. If you're going to be commuting and want a weekend escape bike, buy the CRF. It's light, easy and will do everything you ask of it for half the price of the CCM (but for half the excitement). If you're serious about taking on the world and plan to be riding off-road as much as on asphalt then it's the CCM that sets pulses racing.



'If you're serious about taking on the world then it's the CCM that sets pulses racing'

Andy Davidson

THANKS TO...

Colin and Marianne Walford of Trail Rides Wales for showing us the green lanes in North Wales. Trail Rides Wales operates in North Wales and the team supply Honda CRF250Ls. Visit trailrides-wales.com or call 01686-430522



SECOND OPINION

SIMON LEE, ENDURO RIDER

3rd: Honda CRF250

"The CRF is a friendly trail bike, ideally suited to novice riders or occasional off-roader, but lacks the focus of its relatives. The ride inspires confidence with stable handling and a neutral feel. The engine is friendly and won't intimidate you, even on loose surfaces."

2nd: Yamaha XT660

"The XT is heavy and tall with a specialist enduro bike riding position. The chassis is a bit dated which showed on the trail, but the ride is stable and with a few tweaks it could be a very interesting bike. It also put a smile on my face simply due to having the most grunt."

1st: CCM GP450

"The CCM's unique chassis construction makes for a very stiff frame, isolating the excellent Marzocchi fork and Tractive rear shock. It wins the test for me because it has the most usable and balanced package of chassis and power, it performed extremely well on every surface and its high-spec standard equipment shows that CCM has built a serious, well-considered adventure machine."

What's changed since the prototype?

Six months have passed since I test rode the prototype GP450 in the Peak District. Back then the CCM was impressive both on and off-road and its team have since addressed most of the original niggles. Its pre-production fairing has been swapped for proper plastics by Italian firm Acerbis and, while they still don't match the Japanese for fit and finish, they are certainly fit for purpose.

What's more, the prototype's over-sharp rear brake and the vibrations through its handlebars have both been eased and the seat is now far more comfortable (and handily comes in two height options).

Our biggest worry was that CCM would change the prototype's suspension set-up. The pre-production

bike used WP forks, which have been changed for Marzocchi units (the Tractive rear shock is unchanged). However, the ride and quality remains excellent and compliments the bike's stiff Bond-Lite frame.

That said, the GP does still have some teething problems: the clocks have a slight delay for some reason. Cruise along at 50mph, crack the whip and a couple of seconds later the actual speed will show up. CCM says it's aware of the problem and is looking to fix it.

But my biggest concern is intrusive vibration at the footpegs, which at 60mph are just too much. CCM puts it down to new rubber engine mounts and says it'll return to the old design before the bike goes on sale in March.



Minimalist dash complete with a digital speedo that's a bit slow off the mark



Engine mounts are blamed for excessive vibrations. CCM will be replacing them



CCM GP450 Adventure £7999



Yamaha XT660 Z Ténéré £6999



Honda CRF250L £3999

	CCM GP450 Adventure £7999	Yamaha XT660 Z Ténéré £6999	Honda CRF250L £3999
Engine	Liquid-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke, 4v, DOHC chain drive, five-speed	Liquid-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke, 4v, SOHC, chain drive, five-speed	Liquid-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke, 4v DOHC, chain drive, six-speed
Power	40bhp @ 7000rpm	47bhp @ 6000rpm	23bhp @ 8500rpm
Torque	31.6ftlb @ 6500rpm	42.7lb ft @ 5500rpm	16ftlb @ 7000rpm
Chassis	Bonded aluminium	Steel tube diamond shape	Tubular steel semi-double
Suspension	47mm USD forks adjustable comp, preload and rebound front; monoshock adjustable comp, preload and rebound	43mm telescopic forks with 160 mm travel front; monoshock with adjustable preload rear	43mm USD forks with 220mm travel front; Pro-link single shock with adjustable preload rear
Front tyre	90/90 x 21	90/90 x 21	80/100 x 21
Rear tyre:	120/90 x 18	130/80 x 17	120/80 x 18
Brakes	320mm disc, twin-piston caliper, front; 240mm disc rear	2x 298mm discs, twin-piston caliper, front; 245 mm disc rear	256mm disc, twin-piston caliper, front; 220mm disc rear
Kerb weight	141kg	215 kg	144 kg
Seat height	890mm/960mm	865mm	875mm
Fuel capacity	17 litres	23litres	7.7 litres
Claimed MPG	60	47.71	61.91
Contact	ccm-motorcycles.com	yamaha-motor.eu/uk	Honda.co.uk