

Sub 125

GREAT DEALS | ADVICE | BIKES

Bikes, news, and advice for lovers of small motorcycles

NOT YER RUN-OF-THE-MILL TEEN STUFF

Super-cool 125 specials

Uprising 125

A 1974 Honda CB125, built by custom builder Katros, then further modified by Yusuf Abdul Jamil and Rio Hermanto at Pistone Terrasse. It uses bits from a host of bikes, but the motor is stock.



Suzuki EN125

This humble commuter was badly damaged in a road accident, but owner Douglas Pajjo from Indonesia couldn't bear to give up on it. Suzuki GP100 tank helps create a distinctive look.

Suzuki 'Momentum'

This tracker from The Katros Garage is based on a Suzuki Thunder 125. Plastic bodywork and bulbous vinyl seat are replaced by a raw-finished metal tank and a leather saddle.



Radical Ducati Carallo Sport

Built to compete in the Motogiro d'Italia, this beautiful racer is based on a Ducati 125, and was built by Spain's Radical Ducati – best known for Monster transformations.

Hajarbroxx Killhill CG125

This army-style 70s CG was built up by Hajarbroxx Motorcycles in Indonesia. The frame has been heavily modified to take an extended swingarm from a GL200.



TEST SPECIAL

Small bikes for big adventures

Green lanes in the Peak District on a 125, the Snake Pass, a curry and pint. Who needs to go to the far side of the world?

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We could be anywhere in the world right now. Tents and sleeping bags ooze out of roll sacks strapped to pillion seats, valleys roll beneath foot-pegs, sweat soaks our T-shirts and fills our helmets as we heave our machines out of slushy mud pits and navigate a long, snaking off-road trail. But this isn't Mongolia or the Siberian Road of Bones and we're not on adventure or enduro bikes... we're in the Peak District National Park riding two commuter-friendly 125s – and we're loving it.

We're flying

We have both ridden the A1 to Grantham many times, but never like this. Never have we been flat out like racers battling for a tenth of a second where every sweet little mile per hour counts. In unison, we surveyed the road ahead, analysed it, and bided our time for the perfect moment. There it is, the downhill we have been waiting for. Go! Helmets tucked behind the mini clocks, bums raised, elbows dipped, body position perfect as we glide past the mammoth lorry. Each adrenaline fuelled overtake is euphoric as we hit the magic 70mph mark, never has that number been so hard-earned or felt so good.

Off-road

"You're not riding those things up there are you, son? That's for trail bikes." Well, we're going to give it a go. "Alright lads, up to you," the rambler smirked. We revved our little motors and eyed up the steep shingle-peppered green lane from Edale to Chapel-en-le-Frith. Slamming the Lexmoto into first and racing up the hill on its mud-clogged tyres induced the biggest smile ever. Dakar riders eat your hearts out. The little bikes were doing it, whacking through puddles, over rock slabs, gravel tracks and through muck. Yes, we got stuck a couple of times in pits, the tyres were a bit shaky and we had to dismount and manhandle

WHAT'S THE STORY?

MCN took two commuter-friendly 125s, Honda's tried and tested CBF125 and Chinese firm Lexmoto's ZSX125 out of the city, bunged a couple of camping bags down and ditched the office for a mini adventure in the Peak District. Why? To find out just how much fun you can actually have on a 125 and what exactly they are capable of.



HONDA CBF125, £2600

Engine: Air-cooled, 125 SOHC, single cylinder, five gears, chain drive, fuel-injection
Fuel capacity: 13 litres
Claimed power: 11.3bhp
Claimed torque: 8.27ftlb
Seat height: 792mm
Kerb weight: 128kg
More info: www.honda.co.uk



LEXMOTO ZSX125, £1572

Engine: Air-cooled, 125cc, SOHC, single cylinder, five gears, chain drive, carbureted
Fuel capacity: 18 litres
Claimed power: 10.5bhp
Claimed torque: 6.8ftlb
Seat height: 760mm
Kerb weight: 140kg
More info: www.lexmoto.co.uk

them down big rocks because of the low ground clearance but we couldn't stop laughing.

Tents, rain and a pint

We had our pick of campsites in the Peak District, you couldn't go far without riding past one but decided to pitch up around six. We desperately needed a shower but forgot our towels so we bought a couple of tea towels and swanned off for a much-needed wash. The rain started lashing down, so we ditched the spaghetti hoops and camping stove for a curry house and a pint or four in the local pub.

Snake Pass

As the name suggests Snake Pass is a twisting, curling snake of an A-road crossing the Peak District, and we were on the perfect bikes for it, seriously. The speed limit is 50mph and if we were on anything bigger we would be using a fraction of its power through the bends, in effect pottering along. But when we wanted to we could use our machines' full potential on the road and gun it through the twists and turns. Engines whirling, hearts pumping, daring ourselves not to let go of the throttle as each precious, hard-earned mph was duly fought for. Flat out within the speed limit is exhilarating.

And of course, we could do the opposite too. When the scenery was just too much to take in, we rolled off the throttle and sat at an easy pace, taking it all in. As we slowed so did time. The British countryside did itself proud painting beautiful landscapes of emerald lakes, old stone bridges, lush green grass, rolling hills dotted with sheep and twirls of purple flora lining the road.

Verdict

Who says you need a pannier-clad 200kg, steroid-fuelled behemoth to have fun? We all know the old cliché about good things coming in small packages, and that has never rung truer. We were only gone for two days, we only covered 300 miles. But two friends on two apparently 'totally unsuitable' bikes had the most fun on two wheels in a long time. It was proof that small bikes aren't just for riding around towns, or for those who are constrained by their licence.



Lexmoto ZSX125, left, and Honda CBF125 performed well, covering 150 miles a day



CBF125's soft suspension pitched Liam about at the slightest hint of throttle or brake



The Peak District offered a huge choice of campsites



The 125s handled the off-road stuff surprisingly well



70mph was a struggle but you take in more of the scenery

VERDICT: PICKING FAVOURITES

Liam: It was only a matter of time before cheap, Far East copies started challenging the more expensive Japanese bikes.

Andy: True, they both feel incredibly similar. Interestingly, the Chinese-made Lexmoto isn't clearly the 'cheap version' either. It has a nice digital clock, with speedo, fuel gauge and analog rev counter while the CBF has a wind up odometer and analog speedo. However, the ZSX does have an annoying flip-up side stand, which is too short.

Liam: With a £1000 price difference you'd expect a big difference in quality and performance, but that's not the case. The ZSX matched the

CBF every step of the way apart from outright top speed and fuel economy; felt like it had the better quality suspension, which was way too soft and pitched you back and forth at the slightest hint of throttle or brake. I'd pick the ZSX.

Andy: Both bikes performed well throughout the entire trip, covering 150 miles in a day but I did ache after a while, especially as we averaged 60 on A roads which meant more time in the saddle. As for quality, we rode them only for two days so long-term reliability is still a grey area. Nonetheless, I'd pick the Lexmoto, because of the price, and the fact that it's almost impossible to find any tangible benefit to hang the £1000 extra on for the CBF option.

TOP FIVE: HIGH-TECH SCOOTS



1 Piaggio MP3125

£1500-£2500 (used)

Laugh, but its extra front wheel and baffling parallelogram steering system gives cold-tyre confidence.



2 Aprilia SR50 DiTech

£500-£1000 (used)

The two-stroke scooter with direct fuel injection uses 60% less oil and gives a hefty 140mpg.



3 Honda PCX125

£3949 (new)

Honda's PCX125 stops its engine when idling. By priming the piston and replacing a conventional electric starter, it's ready to go in an instant.



4 Vectrix VX-1

£2000-£3000 (used)

The world's first electric scooter with a 40-mile range, 27bhp and it can be ridden on an A1 licence.



5 Peugeot Jet Force Compressor 125

£1000-£1500 (used)

The only two-wheeler since the 1930s to have a supercharger as standard, boosting power by 50%.

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