

Metric Refined: The Honda VTX 1800T and Shadow Spirit 750 C2

Lost in a sea of chrome, iron and tens of thousands of bikes it's difficult to imagine anything standing out in a crowd... How can anything stand out in the crush of machinery that is Daytona Bikeweek? Jacked up Hummers, chromed supercharged hot dog carts? Someone please just give me a nice reliable bike that I can ride and enjoy!

Bikeland stretches the legs of the 2007 Honda VTX 1800T and the Honda Shadow Spirit 750 C2 in Daytona Beach, Florida.





The 2007 Honda VTX 1800T

It's a beautiful day to go for a ride – the Honda tent is jammed with people – well, pretty much everything is jammed with people. Ready and waiting are the new 2007 Honda VTX 1800T and the 2007 Shadow Spirit 750 C2. Before we head out for the afternoon we take a few minutes to strap a Garmin Zumo 550 to the big 1800 cc twin using a nicely finished chrome Techmount – we don't want to get lost on the straight look-a-like Floridian roads of the Atlantic Coast.

The VTX 1800T is new for Honda in '07 and is one of the large heavyweight metrics. At the top end of Honda's metric lineup, the big 1800 comes equipped with a pair of 24 liter leather saddlebags that hinge out from the bike on brackets to provide access to the rest of the mechanical bits on the back of the machine. The fit and finish of the bags was decent, but the new "stiff like a plank" leather made it difficult to close the snaps on them. We're positive that a few soakings with rain and a road trip or two would soften them up. The bags come with a clever plastic clasp that makes it easy to get in and out of without having to undo the snaps and they easily swallowed up all of our gear for our daytrip, though they were a shade too small to hold a full faced helmet (this isn't an issue in Daytona where apparently no one wears helmets).

The bike comes equipped with a 1795 cc engine that Honda claims churns out a whopping 120 lb/ft of torque at only 3500 rpm... seat of the pants seems to substantiate this as the Honda pulls like your dentist yarding out a wisdom tooth. With all that torque and 106 hp on tap the big cruiser pulled away big bore sportbike style in rollons and provided us with hours of entertainment chugging away from lights, other bikes and cars.

From a rather cool, technical perspective the VTX has a closed loop emissions system with two O2 sensors. Honda tells us that the bike has the largest connecting rods and cylinders Honda has ever made. The VTX's engine is packed full of a bunch of high-tech features and we're going to include the bike's specs at the end of this article.

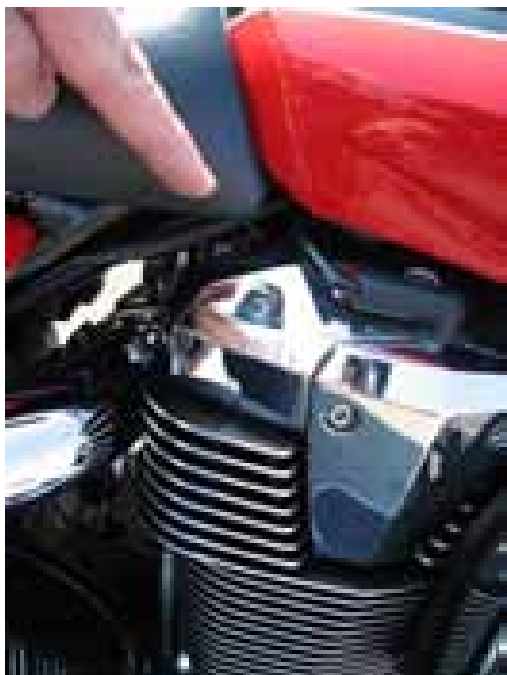
Handling was surprisingly nimble, and once you get rolling the bike's weight disappears under you. The 1800T turned in nicely and I didn't experience any of the stability issues I had when I rode the Kawasaki Vulcan 2000 who's tires and chassis seemed to track the pavement during our test. There was no uneasiness – the VTX is stable and planted providing reassuring feedback from the 45mm inverted forks. It felt, rode and handled more like a jacked up UJM than a big bore cruiser.



The dual front discs and the single rear disc had no problem stopping the big bike. Getting up to speed propelled by its shaft drive, the VTX does display some squat, although it's not overly pronounced. The shifting was smooth and effortless and the large windscreen provided more than enough protection with no buffeting.

The exhaust note from the nicely finished system produced a distinctive growl.

One of my few complaints about this bike had to do with the positioning of the exposed right rear cylinder head cover. This part of the engine stuck out just enough to roast the inside of my upper right thigh. Good thing I don't have fat legs and I was wearing jeans or I'd have a permanent brand from



the thing. Ouch!

Honda states that the VTX has a low 27.4" seat height, and thankfully it wasn't as low as the Spirit that's only 25.7". I'm almost 6' 4" tall and the VTX fit me just fine, but the Shadow's additional 2" drop rocketed my knees above my head. Say it like Schwarzenegger... "I'm not a contortionist".

I'm simply too tall for the 750 Shadow.

Meandering through the straight streets of Daytona, we headed north up the coast towards Tomoka State Park where we encountered one of the 5 corners in





state park part of the scenic drive is via a hard pack white sand road past the ranger station... not very bike friendly, but a cool diversion and worth a look if you get a chance.

The fit and finish of the bike was exceptional, and displayed only a few minor annoyances, one of them being the turn signal indicators on the tank mounted dash cluster. They did a relatively poor job of indicating that your signals were on and could have



the entire state (those of you who have been to Florida know what I'm talking about). Tomoka State park is a wonderful change from the flat, level and featureless hurricane swept

landscape of the Sunshine State. The park provides a small stretch of road with a treed canopy that opens into a marsh where you can stop and soak in the view. The access to the actual



been substantially brighter in our opinion.

Overall the VTX provided a wonderfully smooth and powerful ride wrapped up with classically rock-solid Honda fit and finish. Loaded with a bullet proof Honda engine and tons of power, the 1800T gives you fantastic bang for your buck at an MSRP of \$14,899.

The 1800's closest competition is the Yamaha Stratoliner, the Suzuki C90T and the Kawasaki Vulcan 2000 Classic LT.

2007 Honda VTX1800T

Specifications

Model: VTX1800T
Engine Type: 1795cc liquid-cooled 52° V-twin
Bore and Stroke: 101mm x 112mm
Compression Ratio: 9.0:1
Valve Train: SOHC: three valves per cylinder
Carburetion: PGM-FI with automatic choke
Ignition: Digital, two spark plugs per cylinder
Transmission: Five-speed
Final Drive: Shaft

Suspension

Front: 45mm inverted fork; 5.1 inches travel
Rear: Dual shocks with five-position spring preload adjustability; 3.9 inches travel

Brakes

Front: Dual 296mm disc with LBS three-piston calipers
Rear: Single 316mm disc with LBS twin-piston caliper

Tires

Front: 150/80R-17 radial
Rear: 180/70R-16 radial

Wheelbase: 67.5 inches
Rake (Caster Angle): 32.0°
Trail: 163mm (6.4 inches)
Seat Height: 27.4 inches
Dry Weight: TBD
Fuel Capacity: 5.3 gallons

Colors: Black/Red, Dark Blue Metallic/Metallic Silver, Black (Spec 1 available only in Black)
Meets current EPA standards. California version meets current CARB standards and may differ slightly due to emissions equipment.



PK Rides the 2007 Honda Shadow Spirit 750 C2

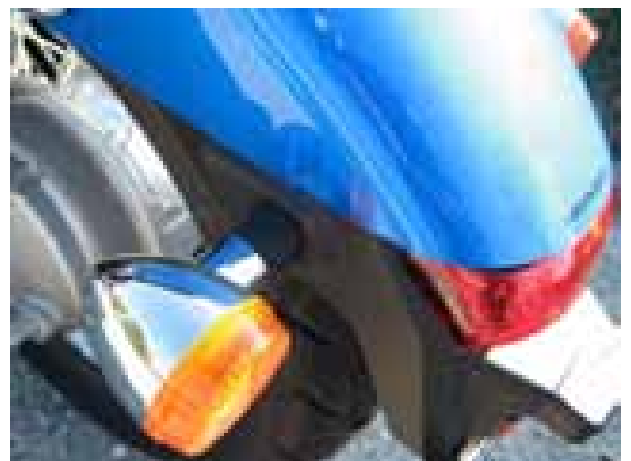
I love my sportbike, but there is something about Daytona bike week that made riding a metric cruiser feel like the right thing to do. Compared to the locals, I felt a bit overdressed in the gear I had brought with me on the plane - gloves, leather jacket, riding boots and my Arai Helmet, but I would have felt even more uncomfortable going as most of the native Floridians do – without helmets and any gear whatsoever.

Thanks to the friendly people at Honda, I was set up with a 2007 Shadow Spirit 750 C2 and set out for the afternoon on the new bike exploring some of Florida's roads. Finally I was riding and not just watching all the bikes cruise by!

The aggressive "hot rod" styling of the 2007 Shadow Spirit is the first thing that caught my eye. It's tied together by elements such as a big 21-inch

wire spoked front wheel, a teardrop air cleaner cover and bullet-style mufflers. With a wide and long fuel tank and shortened rear fender completing the package, the Shadow Spirit looks great for an entry-level metric cruiser.

Sitting on the bike, the riding position was very natural with its short semi-drag styled handlebars, gunfighter seat and the basement level seat height of 25.7 inches. The long and low design of the 503 1/2 pound (dry weight) cruiser made it very easy to maneuver around. I was able to get through the massive crowds of bikes and people easily in the Daytona Speedway grounds and had no problem out on the open roads and in traffic.





The Shadow Spirit is fun to ride, whatever surface the street may be. My afternoon trip took me over potholes, grooved pavement, gravel, grass and for my first time over some of that beautiful white Florida sand! The bike's suspension soaked up the bumps. Although the front suspension was fixed, the rear suspension has a pair of conventional dampers each offering 5 steps of spring preload adjustments so the bike can be set up for different weights and or riding conditions. The lumps in Florida's roads were passed over by the little Honda Cruiser effortlessly, making my day on the borrowed Shadow Spirit stress free.

The new street rod styled Shadow Spirit 750 has a five-speed transmission powered by a 745cc liquid cooled 52 degree V twin. The 2007 Honda had enough power on tap, and used minimal fuel for our day long outing. The Shadow Spirit was easy to ride, nice to look at and has been engineered to be easy to take care of. New on the Shadow for 2007 is Honda's low maintenance shaft-drive system that should provide miles of smooth operation without the frequent need for adjustment.

The only time I missed being on a Sportbike was when I expected the Cruiser to come to a stop the same way. I am sure that Honda could make a cruiser that stopped on a dime, but maybe the cruiser culture doesn't demand



stopping capabilities like that? The Shadow Spirit has a single 296mm drilled disc with a twin-piston caliper up front and a 180mm drum brake in the rear and I honestly felt it could use a bit more in this department. The addition of an adjustable brake lever would have been an added bonus because my reach for the levers was strained at times. Some adjustability would make the bike easier to operate for smaller riders and the same goes for the clutch.

I stopped by the side of the road and took some pictures of the Ultra Blue Metallic Shadow Spirit. I got several nods from other cruiser riders as they were passing by on the road. That's right – I was one of them.

When I finally brought the bike back at the end of the day I didn't want to stop. I wanted to keep riding. My afternoon on the bike had passed by too quickly! The Florida sunshine and the beautiful scenery were too enticing, and made me want to stay on the bike.

I found the Shadow Spirit relaxing and easy to ride. When I returned the bike to Honda, I felt like I had gone for a great massage or had spent a day hanging out at the beach. I think I'm starting to understand the Metric Cruiser Culture – maybe the way you feel when you get off a bike is just as important as how you feel when you are on the road riding it. Spending the afternoon on the 2007 Honda Shadow Spirit 750 felt great.

The Shadow is a bike suited to people of different shapes, sizes and skill levels. It would make an ideal second bike for a couple or family, and it's perfect for a new or reentry rider.

The 2007 Honda Shadow Spirit 750 retails for \$6799 and is available in Ultra Blue Metallic and Black. Change up to the Red/Flame, Black/Flame versions and you'll be set back \$7099.



2007 Honda Shadow Spirit 750 C2

Specifications

Model: VT750C2

Engine Type: 745cc liquid-cooled 52° V-twin

Bore and Stroke: 79mm x 76mm

Compression Ratio: 9.6:1

Valve Train: SOHC; three valves per cylinder

Carburetion: Single 34mm constant-velocity

Ignition: CD with electronic advance, two spark plugs per cylinder

Transmission: Wide-ratio five-speed

Final Drive: Shaft

Suspension

Front: 41mm fork; 4.6 inches travel

Rear: Dual shocks with five-position spring preload adjustability; 3.5 inches travel

Brakes

Front: Single 296mm disc with twin-piston caliper

Rear: Drum

Tires

Front: 90/90-21

Rear: 160/80-15

Wheelbase: 65.0 inches

Rake (Caster Angle): 34° 30'

Trail: 158mm (6.2 inches)

Seat Height: 25.7 inches

Dry Weight: 503.5 pounds

Fuel Capacity: 3.7 gallons, including 0.9-gallon reserve

Colors: Ultra Blue Metallic, Red/Flame, Black/Flame, Black

Meets current EPA standards. California version meets current CARB standards and may differ slightly due to emissions equipment.

