

# IMPRESSION: HONDA CT70

Itsy-Bitsy Teenie-Weenie On-and-Off-the-Road Machinie

**B**efore you dismiss the Honda CT70 as a ridiculous, impractical minibike, consider its unique capabilities. It is street legal, works off the road, and is small enough to be carried on the bumper of a car, in a trunk or in the back of a small station wagon. That last quality means that you can haul it along to use as a bike for short hops while on vacation or just to carry on your motor home's bumper as a backup.

Although its 47-mph top speed is too slow for freeway or highway travel, it is sufficient for commuting on surface streets, and you can absolutely humiliate those mopededestrians. (That is what you call a moped rider, isn't it?) Acceleration is less than startling—and less than almost any car's—so you can't get the holeshots that even 175cc trail bikes get when the light turns green. On hills, speed drops to about 30 mph.

As with other small Hondas, the transmission has an automatic clutch, so you simply tap the lever to change cogs in the three-speed box. There have been other CT70s in the past with four-speed transmissions and manual clutches, but they are history. This is the only surviving model. The auto

Price .....	\$638
Warranty .....	6 months, 4000 miles
Engine type .....	Air-cooled, horizontal 4-stroke single
Valve arrangement .....	SOHC, 2 valves operated by rockers, threaded adjusters
Displacement .....	71.8cc
Compression ratio .....	8.8:1
Carburetion .....	1, 13mm Keihin slide/needle
Ignition.....	Flywheel magneto
Front suspension.....	2.5 in. travel
Rear suspension .....	3.6 in. travel
Front brake.....	Single-leading-shoe drum
Rear brake.....	Single-leading-shoe drum
Front tire .....	4.00x10 Bridgestone
Rear tire .....	4.00x10 Bridgestone
Wheelbase .....	41.3 in.
Seat height.....	29.3 in.
Fuel capacity .....	0.7 gal
Wet weight .....	168 lbs.
Instruments.....	Speedometer, odometer; lights for high beam, turn signals, neutral
Fuel consumption.....	78.3 mpg avg.
Average range.....	55 miles



Although it no longer has the folding handlebars of earlier models, the CT70 is still small enough and light enough to carry on your bumper without tearing it off the car.





While admittedly a bit small for hauling deer out of the woods, the CT is big enough to bring home the fish, and it's more than fast enough to take the dog for a walk.



clutch (which engages as the revs rise, so you can pull away smoothly) and the low seat height combine to make the bike easy to ride for anyone, no matter how short or inexperienced. Even the brakes are very responsive; an extremely strong squeeze on the front brake lever can lock the front wheel on pavement.

Of course some items, like the suspension, are fairly unimpressive. As with many small bikes, the ride is downright brutal if you travel on roads where there are potholes or thick pavement patches. The bike will hold two riders on the seat, but there are no passenger pegs fitted standard, so Honda obviously doesn't recommend or intend that you do this. Predictably, fuel mileage is excellent. We averaged just over 78 mpg in both street and off-road use, which amounts to about 55 miles total range.

Off-road performance is limited to fairly flat terrain. The little 70 is not any kind of hill-climber, but it serves well for traveling on trails or around a farm or ranch. The little fat tires leave a bit to be desired in terms of ride over bumpy terrain, since they fall into every hole in sight. You wouldn't want to charge over rough ground with that short-travel suspension and quick steering, either. Of course, the CT70 isn't much of a charger. It wasn't intended to compete with mini-racers.

It starts willingly and is ready to go immediately, even after being snowed on all night. It's not obnoxiously loud, but it's not whisper-quiet either. If you decide to rev it repeatedly or do donuts in your campsite, you can expect your neighbors to be annoyed—with some cause.

At \$638, the CT70 is priced about like a moped, but it's faster, easier to ride and has a four-stroke engine instead of a two-stroke, so you don't need to mix oil in the fuel. It's also much more versatile than a moped, thanks to its small size, three-speed transmission and off-road ability. For most people, it will appear pointless, but to a few the CT70 is the only answer to a particular set of problems. **M**

## Off The Record

I was quick to scoff at the little red Honda when it first showed up around here. But then I wanted something to take along on a fishing trip, and the CT70 was the only street-legal bike that I could find room for on the motor home, without pulling a trailer. The 70 never thrilled me, but it was very handy: light enough to lift on and off the bumper racks by myself, easy to ride with a fishing rod in one hand, manageable in the mud and sand and still powerful enough to go where I wanted to, even at the 5000 and higher altitudes where we were fishing. I also used it for running to the nearest (8.4 miles) store and taking Brough, my German shepherd, for long walks. Later I used it for commuting to work on surface streets for three days. What other kind of bike could do all that?  
—Art Friedman

For me, riding the CT70 is like a trip down memory trail. My first bike was a Trail 70; a sleek blue one with those bizarre folding handlebars. I paid my parents back by pushing the Lady Kenmore Power-Vac around the house for two years. It really sucked. The vacuum, I mean.

That Honda was great. It required almost no maintenance, and always started and ran easily. The only way I found to kill it was to put the air cleaner element in sideways, then it would go *even slower* than normal, if you can believe that. The CT was never big on speed, particularly up at the 7000-foot altitudes where I did most of my riding. My buddy's two-stroke Gemini 50 SST would eat me alive on the uphills, but I'd get my revenge on level ground. There, the CT's 70ccs of pent-up fury would translate into a one mph top-speed advantage.

And what a handler! It would remain stable even at the top of third gear, yet would claw its way through the slow stuff like a cheetah. On bumps, my friend's Gemini would be bottoming hard enough for *me* to hear it 50 feet down the trail, but the Honda soaked up all but the biggest jolts. This new model has much better suspension than my old one did. I would have killed for the new fork and shocks. Or how about the new model's muffler—ooh, wicked flat black!

The CT70 is the perfect first bike. Safe, reliable, and best of all, a lot of fun.

—Jeff Karr