

This is the

CFMoto 650TR

This is the Chinese-made sport tourer. It costs £5199 and from many points of view... THIS is the future.

WORDS: Alan Cathcart
PHOTOGRAPHY: Stephen Piper

You need to know something of the background to fully appreciate where we are with this motorcycle. And to do that you've got to realise that where the Chinese motorcycle industry has long been associated with small capacity scooters and minibikes, often flimsily built down to the lowest of prices, things have changed.

Earlier this year the debut of the parallel-twin CFMoto 650NK marked the real start of that paradigm shift. That bike, an unashamed reinterpretation of the Kawasaki ER6n, with comparable performance but a 45% lower retail price, worked.

MSL was the first to ride it and what we found was that... well, it worked. No problems, no bugs, no 'I wish it had this'. It worked on par with anything else you would go and seriously look at in the modern marketplace.

That was then, now we've got the world's first test ride on the NK's stable-mate – the TR. The TR is the touring version of the NK. Naturally, we're excited about this bike.

Price is one of the biggest points to note. In the UK these are £4199 for the NK and £5199 for the TR. Both bikes will be coming to British hands through dealer WK Bikes (01507 522900).

Comparisons to more mainstream bikes are immediate, because the TR has to compete on the open market. But this is difficult to do because in Australia (where MSL rode the bike) importer Mojo will be selling it for AUD 7500 including 5% import duty and 10% local sales tax, an affordable price for an entry-level tourer that has no direct competitors beyond the Suzuki V-Strom 650 retailing in Oz for AUD 10,890 complete with optional luggage, though as an adventure tourer that isn't really directly

World Scoop





It might only be a 650 but there's plenty of room.



Decent enough mirrors.



A tidy rear end set-up.



Fairing box is fine if a bit flimsy.

comparable. The 680cc Honda Deauville NT700V with built-in luggage would have been the nearest thing to the Chinese tourer and at the same price as the Suzuki, but production of that's now been discontinued.

Indeed, the reason there's no direct comparison to be made with the 650TR is because this time around CFMoto hasn't copied anybody else's product, but instead has made something unique – a full-fairing hard-luggage junior bagger.

For this test we wanted a proper evaluation of the 650TR's touring pretensions, so *MSL* headed off on a 375 mile, two day tour of the Victorian Goldfields northwest of Melbourne.

If this bike was less than adept at covering miles in style then we'd know soon enough.

On the first eventful day Down Under, *MSL* rode through no fewer than eight successive downpours, which gave a pretty good test of CFMoto's build quality in making the tight-closing panniers. They're definitely waterproof, by the way.

Indeed, the whole motorcycle has a substantial feel about it that's quite out of kilter with the price tag. The mature-looking styling that's vaguely reminiscent of a small-scale early Pan-European is quite sophisticated, with that hard luggage an integral component of the design, rather than just hung on as an afterthought.

This first Chinese tourer looks pretty classy by any standards for a 650 twin. It also seems a lot of

bike for the money. The substantial mirrors give an excellent view behind, as well as protecting your hands to some extent – my leather gloves didn't get damp in any of the successive showers ridden through, for example.

Equally, the non-adjustable screen gave good protection in the rain, and was just the right height for a six-footer to look over it with no undue turbulence.

The 650TR's riding position shows every sign of having been created by people who actually clock up the miles themselves, because the cast aluminium handlebar risers are ideally positioned, with just enough pull-back to deliver a comfortable, straight-backed stance. Though the 795mm seat height means that anyone much taller than me is probably going to feel cramped, my only discomfort came from having to ride with my right toes on the footrest all the time, because otherwise I'd be dragging the rear brake lever – the pedal was set too high.

According to Moto Motorcycles chief executive Michael Poynton, CFMoto claims this can be adjusted 25mm lower – in which case they should make that the default setting, and the few who may want it higher can adjust it upwards. But the low seat will make the 650TR ideal for female riders – among its several target customer groups, which include those in search of something accessible and user friendly to build up long distance experience aboard, as well as couriers for whom the lockable hard luggage will be ideal.

Mojo plans to market the new CFMoto as just that, a 'hers' tourer to go with 'his' BMW R1200RT, Triumph Trophy 1200 or Harley Road King. Makes sense.

But whatever its height, the 650TR's seat is amazingly comfortable. There's zero vibration at any revs, thanks to the engine's well-weighted counterbalancer, and the hefty balance weights in the ends of the handlebars.

Thumb the starter button and the bike immediately comes alive, even from cold after a crisp spring night thanks to the Italian EFI's autochoke programme, and then settles to a 1400rpm idle with a pleasing and distinctive syncopated lilt emanating from the 2-1 exhaust silencer tucked in low down on the right. With the enclosed bodywork there isn't the same deep, throaty roar from the air intakes as you get on its 650NK Naked sister, but for a middleweight twin the 650TR still sounds undeniably muscular. And as before, that parallel-twin engine is torquey, free-revving and smooth, pulling pretty strongly with zero transmission snatch from 2500rpm on part throttle and from 3000rpm wide open. There's a completely linear build of power all the way to the 10,800rpm rev limiter, although it picks up revs a little faster from 7000rpm upwards, when there's an extra spurt of engine acceleration that you wouldn't however characterise as a step in the powerband. The 650TR is a model of rideability, and a key factor in this is the flawless Japanese-quality gearshift and clutch action.

The 650TR is also enjoyable to ride fast, even if acceleration is determined rather than assertive thanks to the 15kg of extra weight this full fairing model with hard luggage carries compared to its 650NK sister. It'll lope along all day at 75mph with the needle on the tachometer poised at 5000rpm, not even halfway to redline, but 100mph ton-up cruising is perfectly feasible, tracking straight as a die with no wobbles, no weaves, and the engine revving at 7000rpm while the effective screen shelters you from blast. Absolute top speed is 120mph with the engine peaking at 8400rpm – it won't pull any higher – but things feel a little stressed running at that speed, and the bike's more comfortable at slightly lower velocities. With torque peaking at 7000rpm and spread widely



Non-adjustable screen works well at weather shifting.



Two glove boxes, easy-to-read instruments and high bars. Pretty good stuff.



Hard luggage comes as standard. 60 litres of it.

SPEC

CFMOTO 650TR

ENGINE:

Liquid-cooled dohc eight-valve parallel-twin four-stroke with 180° crankshaft, chain camshaft drive, and single gear-driven counterbalancer

DIMENSIONS:

83 x 60mm

CAPACITY:

649.30cc

POWER OUTPUT:

69.73bhp @ 8500rpm (at crankshaft)

MAXIMUM TORQUE:

45.72lb-ft @ 7000rpm

COMPRESSION RATIO:

11.3:1

ENGINE MANAGEMENT:

EFI electronic fuel injection with Ducati Energia ECU, 2 x 38mm ITT throttle bodies, and single Magneti Marelli injector per cylinder

GEARBOX:

Six-speed with gear primary drive

CLUTCH:

Multiplate wet

CHASSIS:

Tubular steel diamond frame employing engine as fully-stressed member

SUSPENSION:

Front: 41mm KYB/Kayaba telescopic fork
Rear: Extruded steel swingarm with tubular bracing and KYB/Kayaba cantilever monoshock

WHEELBASE:

1415mm

WEIGHT:

208kg dry (220kg with oil/water/full fuel tank)

BRAKES:

Front 2 x 300mm steel discs with twin-piston calipers
Rear 1 x 225mm single disc with single-piston caliper

WHEELS/TYRES:

Front 120/70ZR17 CST Radial on 3.50in cast aluminium wheel
Rear 160/60ZR17 CST Radial on 4.50in cast aluminium wheel

SEAT HEIGHT:

795mm

FUEL CAPACITY:

17.5 litres

TOP SPEED:

125mph

MANUFACTURER:

CFMoto Power Co. Ltd., Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China



“The CFMoto 650TR is as capable and pleasing — as well as practical — a ride as any motorcycle costing twice the price, with half the looks”

enough throughout the powerband that there's no point in revving it anywhere near that 10,800rpm limiter, I shifted gear at 8000 revs and found myself back in the fat part of the torque curve every time.

Paint depth and overall finish of the 650TR are pretty good, probably the equal of a budget-priced bike made in Italy, though the plastic switchgear still seems a little low-rent, and the metal castings' brightwork finish isn't very bright. While easily accessible, the sidestand is rather on the short side (there's no centrestand). There are two useful pockets in the fairing either side of the handlebars, with the lid of the one on the left lockable, if a little flimsy — locking it would be a deterrent against a casual thief but not a determined one. The one on the right is deep enough to give space for a folded map, and while there's room to clamp a GPS to the centre of the handlebar, there's no socket to power it from — another omission CFMoto should remedy on a bike with touring pretensions.

Even with Kayaba's Chinese affiliate providing the 41mm telescopic fork, and the cantilever monoshock operated directly by a swingarm made from steel extrusions with tubular upper bracing, the 650TR's suspension was a little stiff, and not very compliant. There seemed to be insufficient front rebound damping on the 41mm KYB fork, meaning it started to pogo up and down over a succession of bumps, and the cantilever rear end seemed to have insufficient

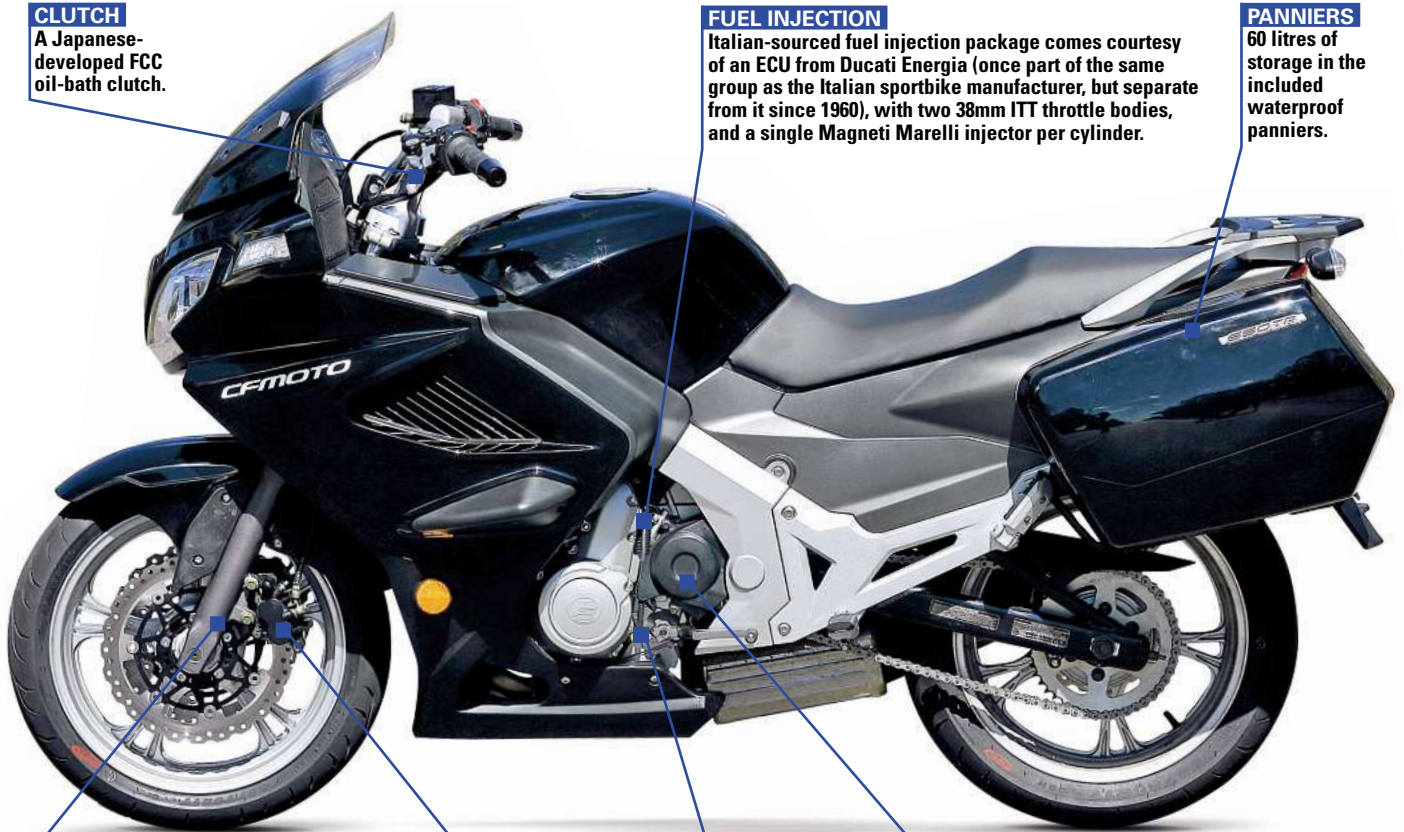
travel to help it smooth out all the bumps it encountered. This could have been because the extra weight of my luggage inside the panniers took up the slack on the shock's coil-over spring preload, and since I couldn't alter that setting, I had to put up with it. It wasn't dysfunctional — ride quality was acceptable for such a budget-priced package, without being exceptional — but it didn't match the ability of the same suspension in its 650NK sister bike to absorb bumps and ripples in the road surface. But the way the 650TR steers is indeed excellent, the not excessively short 1415mm wheelbase and pretty neutral steering geometry delivering poise plus stability, allowing me to pick a line to avoid damp patches or nature's road litter quite easily. It's a confidence inspiring bike to ride — this is a well-behaved motorcycle at any speed.

It's pretty economical too, with a 50mpg reading acquired over one 165 mile stint, which gives a 200 mile range from the 17.5 litre tank.

The CFMoto 650TR is as capable and pleasing — as well as practical — a ride as any motorcycle costing twice the price, with half the looks. Just how well it'll wear the passage of time has yet to be proven, but since it's seemingly as well manufactured as it's been engineered, like its 650NK sister, this may well be that long-awaited Chinese-made touring bike that'll make the breakthrough in Western markets — especially at that price. The 650TR model is an awful lot of motorcycle for the money.



No ABS option available, yet!



CLUTCH

A Japanese-developed FCC oil-bath clutch.

FUEL INJECTION

Italian-sourced fuel injection package comes courtesy of an ECU from Ducati Energia (once part of the same group as the Italian sportbike manufacturer, but separate from it since 1960), with two 38mm ITT throttle bodies, and a single Magneti Marelli injector per cylinder.

PANNIERS

60 litres of storage in the included waterproof panniers.

SUSPENSION

41mm fork supplied by KYB/Kayaba's Chinese affiliate is non-adjustable, just like the same company's cantilever rear shock that can't be adjusted for spring preload to take account of a passenger.

FRONT BRAKES

Twin 300mm front discs gripped by twin-piston calipers. ABS is not an option yet.

POWER

69.73bhp @ 8500rpm and maximum torque of 45.72lb-ft @ 7000 revs

ENGINE

The same 83 x 60mm dohc parallel-twin 649cc eight-valve motor as found in the 650NK, complete with 180° crankshaft (so, one piston up/one down), chain camdrive, and a gear-driven counterbalancer to smooth out the vibes.



WHERE WE RODE IT

MSL's test route on the TR meant a 240 mile long Day One, following a route which took us out from Melbourne along the four-lane Western Highway through Ballarat, where gold was first struck in 1851, prompting a rush of prospectors that eventually led to the Eureka Stockade revolt three years later.

On to the neighbouring town of Ararat, 60 miles away, for a visit to the Cathcart Ridge winery, before heading off into the bush along the well surfaced but bumpy Victoria country roads, en route to Maryborough to overnight in the heart of the goldfields.

Into the winding, hilly country which took in some great roads like the one from Maldon – an unspoilt piece of gold rush Victoriana that was declared Australia's first Notable Town back in 1966, and thus saved from development, to Castlemaine (yes, the place where XXXX beer was invented, though that's now brewed somewhere else).



We reckon it's quite a looker.