



USED BUYING GUIDE with Kev Raymond

2011-current HONDA VFR800X

It's a VFR Jim, but not as we know it. Meet the Crossrunner...

THE CROSSRUNNER HAS always had a bit of an identity problem. Ask the average biker about it and they'll say, "Oh yeah, that's the big adventure bike with the VFR1200 motor and funny gearbox, isn't it?" No, that's the Crosstourer. "Oh, in that case it must be the small adventure bike with half a car engine, a scooter boot and the funny gearbox." Nope, that's the NC700/750X. "Oh. Dunno then."

For the record, the Crossrunner hasn't got a funny gearbox - it hasn't got a funny anything. It's basically just a VFR800 with a makeover. "An excellent, versatile motorcycle that works well and is great fun," we said when we first rode it. But there was a problem. At just over nine grand at launch, it was seriously overpriced for a fairly basic bike built from long-in-the-tooth components (though it was cheaper than the VFR it was based on). For the same money in 2011 you could have had a Triumph Tiger 800 and kept £1700 in your pocket.

So it was no surprise the Crossrunner failed to fly out of dealers. But things change, and once those dealers started offering heavy discounts and sweetening the deal with optional extras like heated grips and luggage, they started attracting an audience of everyday riders - many of them former VFR owners - who appreciated its easy-going manners and relatively low running costs.

WHAT IS IT?

It's a VFR800 VTEC, with a new, vaguely adventure-bike suit of clothes, an upright riding position and lower-spec running gear. From 2015 (the second generation) it gets the latest VFR engine, with traction control and less obtrusive VTEC operation, as well as better suspension and brakes, and a less controversial styling job.

WHAT TO PAY

£4750-£7000

Plenty of choice of first generation Crossrunners, so you can be picky. Look for luggage, uprated suspension and other extras, plus service history. You might also find the odd 2015 bike creeping into this bracket.

£7000-£9000

Not many used second-gen bikes out there yet. Low-mileage bikes with the full Rider Pack of extras start at under 7k. New, pre-reg 2016 bikes can be had for under £9500 - almost a grand under list.



◀ The original 2011 Crossrunner's 'urban camo' paint scheme was definitely not to everyone's taste

What's it like on the road?

It depends. And what it mostly depends on is whether it's still on its original tyres. Pretty much every owner hates the OE Pirelli Scorpion Trail rubber. It's not so much that they're bad tyres, but they don't suit this bike. Owners say they're okay on warm, dry tarmac, but they're unresponsive in the cold and downright scary in the wet.

Brakes on the early model are linked front to rear - some owners love it, some hate it. Happily, they're not linked from 2015-on. Low-speed balance on both models is excellent - this bike is a natural for a longer commute that takes in faster roads and a bit of clogged city traffic. And it's fine on smooth roads in the dry, too. But it's less happy when the bumps kick in - the rear shock on early bikes is particularly soft - and the front-end feels vague in the wet. The



◀ A winner on city streets, unless they're wet and you're on stock tyres

"Low-speed balance on both generations of bike is excellent"

second-gen model is more sure-footed and the longer travel suspension front and rear gives you a more comfy ride over rough surfaces.

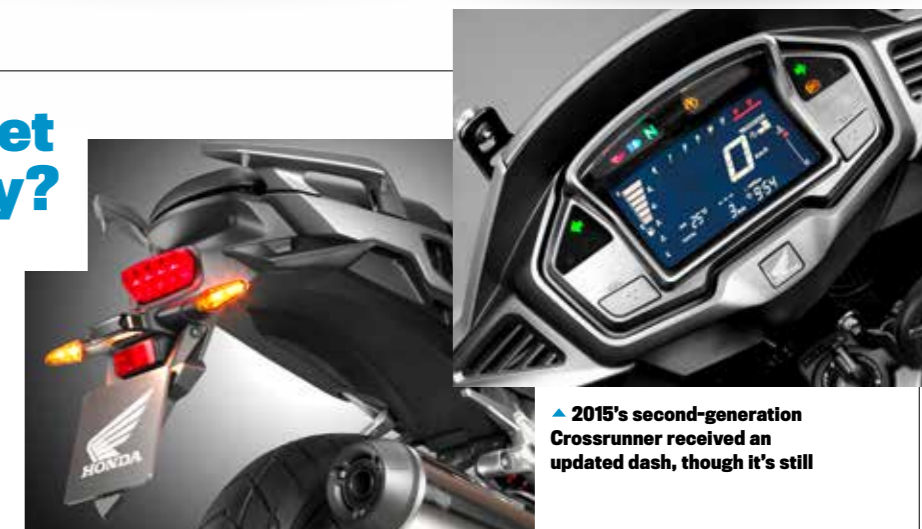
The defining feature of the bike, though, is the engine. It's pure VFR - a combination of growling grunt and howling hooligan that seems to adapt

itself to suit your mood. The second-gen benefits from improvements to the VTEC system which smooth out the previously harsh step as it kicks in around 6500rpm, as well as very nicely set up traction control that begs you to push your luck a bit on corner exits to see if you can activate it...

What do you get for your money?

Not many bells and no whistles at all, at least on first-generation models. That gives you the excellent VFR engine, frame and most of the rear end, including single-sided swingarm and wheels, but the suspension and brakes are pretty basic, with limited adjustment and crude damping. You get ABS as standard, with semi-linked brakes (the front lever operates two of the front caliper's three pistons, the rear pedal operates the rear caliper and one front piston), HISS immobiliser system, LED lights front and rear, and a well-featured LCD dash (borrowed from the CBR600). And that's about it.

The later model has a more generous spec sheet, with a better dash, better quality, more adjustable suspension (with preload and rebound adjustment at both ends, including a remote preload adjuster at the rear), and a two-stage traction control system. Bigger,



▶ Both models have LED lights front and rear, as well as ample provision for pillion

▶ 2015's second-generation Crossrunner received an updated dash, though it's still

posher brakes (radial four-pot calipers and 310mm discs vs the original's three-pot sliding calipers and 296mm discs) are welcome, as is the ditching of the front/rear link. You also get computer-controlled, self-cancelling indicators, which Honda are very proud of, and which most owners loathe. Oh, and a two-position adjustable seat - the

lower position is 815mm tall, same as the old bike, and the upper one is 20mm taller (the old bike was a bit cramped for taller riders).

The price tag has always been an issue, and post-update it went up by a grand, so to keep stock moving, UK second-gen bikes come as standard with a Rider Pack including multi-stage heated grips, built-in TomTom satnav, a rear rack and topbox, plus an Akrapovic silencer.

What owners say...

MOST OWNERS SEEM to be in their 50s and 60s, with the odd slightly younger exception. Most also seem to be highly experienced, with unbroken riding careers going back to teenage mopeds and only a few a few born-again, plus one or two newbies. None of our sample had racked up huge mileages, but several were making a good start.

Alan Hatton-Yeo is pretty typical - he's put over 14,000 miles on his 2016 800X in less than a year, travelling round for his job as a medical consultant. "I've always been a high-mileage rider," he says. "I got up to 50,000 miles a year at one stage and I've always been interested in how people cope with a motorcyclist rather than a man in a suit turning up to meetings. I am a very demanding owner and my bikes have to be fun and practical. I originally wanted the new VFR but didn't like the riding position, or the first iteration of the



▲ Alan Hatton-Yeo uses his 800X for work, and has covered 14,000 miles in less than a year

Crossrunner. I tried the latest 800X three or four times before I finally decided it was what I wanted. It is very smooth, agile, has great lights, it's fast, comfortable and engaging to ride. I got full luggage with mine so it's perfect for touring and carting my work stuff. I also spent time setting the suspension up properly, which makes a noticeable difference. Economy is good and the riding position is spot-on for mountain passes or filtering on the M6. It is also a return to that quality finish I always loved on VFRs. It's a keeper."

John Grinham's at the upper end of our age - and experience - range. Now in his early-70s, he's had everything from a Vincent 1000 to a Blackbird, but his 2016 Crossrunner is a replacement for a Kawasaki 1400GTR. "That bike was a mistake - I just couldn't gel with it," he explains. "The Crossrunner suits me very well, though it's quite heavy for its capacity - virtually the same as my Blackbird was. But once I'm riding it's stable and well-balanced; I can easily ride to a standstill in traffic without putting my feet down. The riding position is compact but good for me. It's great on long runs of around 350 miles a day, though - as with all bikes - the seat can get a little firm after a few hours."

RAF pilot Gareth Walker only has 4000 miles on his 2016 800X, but that's going to rise quickly. He commutes 102 miles



▲ John Grinham's second-generation Crossrunner replaced his Kawasaki 1400GTR

"It's great on long runs of 350 miles a day"

John Grinham Honda Crossrunner owner

every day. "My old VFR VTEC was my commuter bike, but the riding position was hurting my hands, so it's for sale now - with 72,000 miles on the clock," he says. "The 800X is proving a perfect replacement - with Honda build quality, a comfy riding position, with great view and excellent mirrors. But it's the V4 engine that makes all VFRs special. You can commute, tour, scratch, go two-up... everything, on a VFR. The LED headlights are better than the old incandescent bulbs so it's safer, too. There's plenty of room under the seat as well. It's a great all-rounder, comfy, has a fantastic engine, is reliable, and I know it will last 100k+ miles if I need it to."

Owners' tyre tips



Piorelli Angel GT
£230 a pair

> Praised for their good wet and dry feel and reasonable mileage - you should get around 8000 miles from a rear in normal use.



Michelin Pilot Road 4 £255 a pair

> By far the most popular choice - most owners agree they offer great wet-weather feedback in particular. Pilot Power 3s are stickier in the dry and £29 cheaper.



Avon Storm 3D XM
£152 a pair

> Not universally liked, but streets ahead of the original tyres - and a lot cheaper than most of the competition. Well worth a try.

Prices are mail order. Add £6 per pair for P&P. Source: SMD Tyres, 01942 604511

What will it cost me?

Insurance

The Crossrunner is seen as pretty low-risk - for rural riders at least. If you're out in the wilds it's not worth having Third Party Fire and Theft at £79 when Fully Comp is only £13 extra. The extra hazards of commuting and casual damage mean a city rider would be looking at nearly double the cost for Fully Comp, but TPFT is a reasonable £115. It seems the Crossrunner's not a high-risk theft target.

FUEL ECONOMY (INJECTED)

SPEED	MPG	RANGE
Slow	40	168 miles
Average	48	201 miles
Fast	55	230 miles

Know your...

Honda Crossrunners



2011-2014 VFR800X RC60

▲ Well-proven VFR800 power and drivetrain, with budget suspension and a styling job that's half adventure bike, half jetski. ABS brakes, linked front and rear. No front suspension adjustment; preload and rebound at the rear. £4750-£6800



2015-on VFR800X RC80

▲ Big update, using the latest VFR drivetrain. Radial callipers, bigger discs, updated ABS (no longer linked), remote preload adjuster at the rear, more travel, more power, traction control, adjustable seat, new dash, and a re-style. Most are sold with the 'Rider Pack' including topbox, centrestand, heated grips, Akrapovic silencer and TomTom satnav as standard. £6750-£9000



◀ First generation Crossrunner works well for two-up trips

Parts and servicing

Service schedule

The Crossrunner was one of the first modern Hondas to move away from pointless 4000-mile interim 'services' designed simply to increase workshop traffic. Basic intervals are 8000 miles - and that's just an oil and filter change and a general check, tighten and inspection. Every other service sees valve clearances and spark plugs checked (and replaced at 32,000 miles), as well as the air filter replaced. Brake and clutch fluid is changed every two years, coolant every three. There's no specific requirement for re-greasing steering head bearings or suspension and swingarm pivots, but you'd be wise to include it at a major service. Like all V4s, the engine plumbing is a nightmare, but if you're methodical most servicing work is within the scope of a competent home mechanic (though most are wary of anything to do with the VTEC). The biggest problem is getting the bodywork off without breaking it, or losing/breaking the many plastic retaining clips.

New and used parts prices

New genuine service bits aren't too bad. Air and oil filters are £33.60 and £11.99 respectively, brake pads £30.70 a pair and discs themselves £139.24 each. For pattern parts from Wemoto you're looking at £20.69 and £4.75 for oil and air filters, with brake pads from £19.51 a pair. Head bearings from Wemoto are £24.36, wheel bearings from £9, and fork seals from £8.17 a pair. Chain and sprocket kits start from around £100, a heavy-duty battery from £40.31 and a replacement regulator/regulator from £96 (a new Honda one is £260...).

You won't find many 800Xs in breakers and we haven't seen any second-gen models. For the first-gen we've seen fairing panels from around £30 each, brake and clutch levers around £20 each, mirrors for £25, a starter motor for £50 (same as CBR600F), stick coils for £45 each, and a standard silencer for £65.

system from Slovakia called the Nemo 2 - you fill a small oil reservoir on the handlebars, and twist the cap to pressurise the oil so it flows on to the chain as you ride. One half twist is enough for up to 200 miles. Visit www.cobrra.sk/en for more details. It's definitely worth the investment - either system is around £99, but a new genuine chain and sprockets will set you back an eye-watering £285. With a chain-oiler and the odd cleaning session you should easily get enough miles from a set to make up for your initial outlay.

8 SUSPENSION

It's basic. Very basic on early bikes. An upgrade to a better quality aftermarket shock (Nitron gets the nod from many) will make an enormous difference, along with a revalve of the forks. As owner Guy said after getting his suspension sorted with Racetech parts by PDQ, "My wallet's four figures lighter, but my motorcycle is now awesome - I can now fly over sharp bumps without needing to shout 'BRACE!' as I approach."

9 COMFORT

The seat's a bit hard, but the riding position's OK so most people find it pretty comfy overall. A couple of owners say they put the adjustable seat on their second-gen bikes on the low position at the back, and the high position at the front, which stops them sliding forwards under braking. The seat can chafe the tank in the high position, by the way, so adding a clear protective film is a wise move. Most owners criticise the standard screen - Givi, Puig, Powerbronze and MRA alternatives are popular, but as ever it's down to personal preference. →

What to look out for...

Owners and mechanics highlight the weak spots

1 ENGINE

Nothing to see here, move along. Not one owner we spoke to had a bad word to say about the engine and basic running gear. And none had suffered any significant breakdown.

2 KEYS

Don't lose them! Because of the built-in HISS immobiliser system, if you lose both keys then your ECU is scrap and will have to be replaced. You can get extra keys cut and coded by a Honda dealer so long as you have at least one key and the numberplate, so make sure you get both keys when you buy a used bike, and keep the spare somewhere safe. It might be worth getting an extra spare cut just in case.

3 LUGGAGE

Unsurprisingly, lots of owners want the ability to load up for their holidays. Givi systems are by far the favourites, except for those owners who managed to get a good deal on otherwise pricey standard kit straight

from the dealers. Beware, though - for some reason, the second-gen has a reduced luggage carrying capacity of 18kg compared with the original bike's 33kg. No one seems to know why - and bear in mind this includes the weight of the luggage itself. It's a very low limit for what Honda call, 'an adventure sport tourer.' Add in an overall carrying capacity of 192kg for pre-2015 and 195kg for post-2015 and you need to think carefully before giving a lift to your fat mate, especially as some owners reported high speed wobbles (at highly illegal speeds) with full luggage fitted...

4 ELECTRICS

Mostly good so far, though early bikes are starting to show signs of corroded connectors and bad earth points. Catch it in time and it'll be no big problem. There have been at least a couple of cases of the loom rubbing on a radiator mount on the left side, and potentially shorting out - worth checking. There's a tilt sensor under the tail which cuts off the ignition if the bike

falls over. That's good, but many owners don't know that in order to reset it, you have to turn the ignition all the way off, then on again. Otherwise the bike simply won't restart. Heated grips are criticised by some for not being hot enough - adding handguards helps. Also, it's worth noting that the grips default to their last setting each time you turn the bike on - so if you left them on minimum, that's where they'll resume.

5 CLOCKS

Several owners complain that their clocks mist up in wet weather - especially on later models. A couple had succeeded in getting them changed under warranty, but others had seen their claims turned down. At the very least, avoid pointing a jetwash anywhere near the clocks...

6 FINISH

Most owners are happy with the general finish of their bikes, but a few all-weather riders report problems with flaking engine paint, chipping fork legs and general corrosion. Exhaust clamps also have a habit of falling apart with rust. The 'stupidly short' front mudguard is universally criticised, as it lets the whole engine get covered with

crud - fitting an extender makes a huge difference/ A rear hugger's a sound idea, too, but some cheaper fibreglass huggers are a terrible fit and need significant work to stop them rubbing. Fragile panel lugs are singled out for criticism, but it's more a case of them being fiddly. For each tank panel, for example, you need to remove the clips, then slide the panel back a few mm to disengage it before it comes off cleanly.

7 CHAIN

First, don't over-tighten the chain - you'll restrict suspension movement and badly affect the handling. There should be 30-40mm of freeplay at the tightest point. Owners are split between those who complain that they have to adjust and lube the chain all the time, and those who've fitted an automatic chain-oiler. Scottolier systems are predictably popular, but several owners recommend a simple

"If you lose both keys, your ECU will have to be replaced"

▼ **V4 shunt and cornering ability to match: Honda's Crossrunner is a canny, if leftfield, choice**



“It follows hard in the wheeltracks of other overlooked Hondas”

THE *RIDE* VERDICT

MANY OWNERS WILL hate me for saying it, but the Crossrunner really is well worth a second look, especially the updated 2015-on version. Why will they hate me? Well, because they're mostly pretty happy to be riding something a bit unusual that's often dismissed by the mainstream and is therefore a bit of a bargain, because that image serves to keep used prices low.

So, far from banging the drum for their chosen ride, owners tend to prefer to keep quiet about it. In that respect the Crossrunner's following hard in the wheeltracks of other overlooked Hondas that have gained enthusiastic, loyal followings - from the CX500 to the NC700 and 750. via the Transalp,

Deauville and Revere, there's always a place for solid reliability, sensible running costs and relative anonymity.

That alone guarantees the early Crossrunner an appreciative audience, but the 2015-on update version is everything the original should have been and more, especially combined with the Rider Pack of extras that's fitted to most bikes. And with prices starting at under five grand for an early bike and around seven (and falling fast) for a 2015 model, the Crossrunner's a potentially really canny buy. But do everyone a favour - keep that to yourself. **R**

USEFUL CONTACTS

www.mcnbikesforsale.com
www.honda-crossrunner.com
www.vfrdiscussion.com



SPEC 2011 HONDA VFR800X CROSSRUNNER (2015 IN BRACKETS)

Engine	782cc 16v dohc V4, l/c
Power	100bhp @ 10,000rpm (104bhp)
Torque	54lb.ft @ 9500rpm (55lb.ft)
Transmission	6-speed, chain
Chassis	Aluminium twin spar
Front suspension	43mm conventional forks, no adjustment (preload and damping adj)
Rear suspension	Monoshock, adjustable preload and rebound damping (remote preload)
Front brake	2 x 296mm discs, 3-piston calipers, combined ABS system (2 x 310mm discs, 4 piston calipers, no link)
Rear brake	256mm disc, twin-piston caliper, combined ABS system (no link)
Front tyre	120/70 R17
Rear tyre	180/55 R17
Wheelbase	1465mm
Rake/trail	25.5°/96mm
Seat height	816mm
Fuel tank	21 litres
Fuelled weight	238kg

Coming soon...

In future issues we'll be running used buying guides on the **2010-on Kawasaki Z1000SX**, the **Triumph Speed Triple 1050** and the **BMW R1200R**. If you own (or have owned) one of these, we want to hear from you. Email Kev: ridemagazine@orange.fr