

Used Bike Guide

HONDA SP-1

- Japanese exotica
- Solid build quality
- Decent investment



PRICE GUIDE: £3495 - £4499

Cheapest private: £3,495
2001, 26,500 miles, original condition, T&T

Our choice private: £3,999
2001, 7,500 miles, F&H, no corrosion, very clean

Cheapest dealer: £3,595
2000, 23,000 miles, good condition, SH, p/x

Our choice dealer: £4,499
6,700 miles, F&H, 12m T&T, near perfect

Ex-demo: N/A
Not a current machine

The SP-1 could have, and probably should have, been one of Honda's most desirable creations. Unlike most Hondas, it wasn't a vehicle for the masses. Far from it, this was a product of years of frustration and an unbreakable will. The V-twins had a vice-like grip over the world superbike championship (thanks mainly to the rules), and the Big H didn't like it. They finally gave up on the four cylinder format and, with a little help from a famous Texan, the new twin cylinder RC51 won the championship in its debut year. The

stage was set for the release of one of the all time great race-reps.

Most superbikes start life as a roadbike, not this time. We were about to get an actual superbike, albeit a slightly refined version for the public highway. It looked the part, which is always a good start. It may not be pretty, but there's something very appealing about its aggressive lines. For the ultimate in garage porn you really want the later SP-2 in white or Castrol colours. Not only is it more emotive but the works replica swingarm makes a big difference to the bike's stance. Still, this SP-1 is unmistakably pure racer. The digital dash isn't the easiest to read, and screen braces went out with the Ark, but on this bike they just add to the sense of occasion.

Sadly, despite the pedigree and obvious appeal, the finished roadbike was hardly what you'd call 'must have' machinery. In fact, it's been pretty much overlooked for a decade. The first big mistake was its name, the VTR1000 SP-1. The less than sexy

Function meets form - just. The SP-1 was never pretty, but it worked well



Not even Colin Edwards winning the world championship could pull a minger like this



Although hardly a roaring success on release a decade ago, one of the most iconic shapes in Honda's racing history is beginning to find new favour

ENGINE	Type	999cc, liquid-cooled, 8v, V-twin
	Bore x Stroke	100 x 63.6
	Compression	10.8:1
	Fuelling	EFI, 54mm throttle bodies
	Tested Power	123bhp @ 9,850rpm
CHASSIS	Tested Torque	98Nm @ 11,500rpm
	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	F Suspension	Monoshock, fully adjustable
	R Suspension	Monoshock, fully adjustable
	Front Brakes	Four-piston Nissin calipers, 320mm discs
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Monoshock, fully adjustable
	Wheelbase	1409mm
	Seat Height	820mm
	Dry Weight	199kg
	Fuel Capacity	18L
SPEED	0-60	3.67s
	0-100	7.26s
	0-120	10.09s
	Stg ¼ Mile	11.55s @ 127.55mph
	Standing Mile	30.27 @ 154.16mph
	Top Speed	156mph



A trick race dash looks the business. Shame the numbers don't go up quickly enough

Firestorm already wore the VTR1000 moniker, and that didn't help bragging rights. RC-51 would have been just fine, but never mind.

The other problem with the bike, and it's kind of big one, is that for ten grand (serious cash a decade ago) the performance was average at best. Alright it was cheaper than a Ducati but they were hardly champions of

the running, as a fast road or track weapon, forget it.

The worst, and most annoying of the SP-1's faults, is also the first to raise its ugly head. I'm referring to the now infamous fuel injection. It was one the industry's early efforts and was barely fit for purpose. With big cylinders and injectors from Hozelock, the pick-up off a closed

For ten grand the SP-1's performance was average at best

VFM. However, the experience starts well with a focused and encouraging riding position behind that pure race bike view. Thumb the starter and the subsequent bark from its twin cans, combined with a menacing electrical whine, offers more to the ears than your average inline four. If you only want a bike to stand next to at your local cafe meet the SP-1 could be in

throttle is about as subtle as the steam catapult on the USS Nimitz. Back in the day with the less accomplished rubber the transition from full lean to exit was always stressful and sometimes just plain dodgy. It's a shame because the rest of the motor isn't at all bad.

The delivery is impeccably linear that helps to restore some confidence,

INSURANCE GUIDE

RIDER 1 25-years-old, 3 years No Claims Bonus, licence held for 6 years, currently no points

TPFT	EXCESS	COMP	EXCESS
£260	£450	£511	£450

RIDER 2 35-years-old, 8 years No Claims Bonus, licence held for 12 years, currently no points

TPFT	EXCESS	COMP	EXCESS
£138	£450	£250	£450

Bike: 2001 - £4,000

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SUSPENSION

The Honda Multi Action System cartridge fork is fully adjustable, as is the Pro-Link rear suspension with HMAS shock. They need to be, because as standard set-up needs plenty of work. The brakes can over power the bike, while the dodgy fuelling hampers quick exits out of turns. It's not perfect, but can be made better.

ERGONOMICS

It's not the comfiest bike in the world, but when you have to stop and fuel up every 100 miles you won't really notice the high pegs and aggressive stance of the bike. But that's what you get for buying a race rep - and good on you for doing so.

FUEL TANK

The SP-1 was thirsty. Twins are hardly frugal machines but the 18-litres that Honda gave the bike just wasn't enough. With an enthusiastic right hand you could be looking for fuel station every 100 miles or so, which could get on your mates' tits if they had machines that would run harder for longer.

SWINGARM

The aluminium swingarm pivots on both the engine and the frame, and looks mighty fine in the process. If that wasn't enough, the race kit offered a stiffened member - oh matron. The SP-2 offered a lighter and stiffer swingarm, after Honda learned lessons about how the SP liked to steer.

EXHAUSTS

Twin pipes were all the rage as we went into the noughties. But you can see here that Honda were hardly generous letting its bike breath. Power gains are to be had by ditching the stock pipes and running on those until your bike has appreciated to over ten grand. Then it's time to get the stock pipes on to put on and sell.

FRAME

The SP-1 uses a conventional twin-spar frame using the engine as a stressed member. The steering head is cast to direct air into the airbox. Years before the SP-1's development, Honda stuck a V-twin motor in an NSR500 chassis, but there's no such culture here.

BRAKES

Four piston Nissin brakes chomp on big 320mm discs and they sure are hungry. They may be old, but they work well and make up for any lost ground on the way out of turns. Interestingly, the calipers are mounted on aluminium stays rather than directly to the fork legs.

ENGINE

The SP-1 possessed the largest pistons Honda had ever used in any of its vehicles. The massive 100 x 66mm forged pistons can be hesitant to move at low revs, but get up to steam nicely. There's also a close-ratio gearbox inside, ceramic composite cylinder sleeves and iridium tipped spark plugs.



RUNNING COSTS

Service interval:

Minor	4,000 miles
Major	12,000 miles

Service cost (main dealer):

Minor	£150.00
Major	£225.00

Top fairing:	£231.00
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RH Engine casing:	£96.41
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Brake lever:	£35.13
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Thanks to Kent Motorcycles, 01227 832601
Find them online @ kent-motorcycles.co.uk

and although it seems paltry today 125bhp was pretty good for a twin – even five years ago. While probably unappealing to avid Ducatisi the SP-1's lack of thumping bottom end makes it more palatable for those less used to the twin cylinder format. For 2010 this isn't a fast bike; modern 1000s make more torque and are far more flexible thanks to the extra revs, not to mention the 50 extra horses.

The chassis follows in a similar vein. The steering is still rewarding thanks to its predictable neutrality, even if it does need a bit of a shove compared to new offerings. Likewise the brakes are still very good with plenty of power and only a fraction less feel than we've become used to. There's another fly in the ointment,

There's another fly in the ointment

though. When pushing hard, which we're entitled to do on a race-rep, the SP-1 losses composure much quicker than a Mille or 999. It's only at the last few percent of grip and lean, but it hampers track and fast road work. It's not like you can get it over that far with the comedy hero blobs in place anyway, but it feels a lot less sure footed than any sportsbike on the market today. Set-up can obviously help, just ask Colin for the settings.

So why the interest in a bike that's had little to offer over the last ten years? Well, the SP-1 was made in small numbers and is obviously getting on a bit. Despite being reliable they're a dying breed. In another ten years there could be very few low mileage original bikes out there. This makes those still out there something of a collector's piece. If you only ride on the odd hot Sunday and don't need ultimate performance, an SP-1 could be a very nice little punt.

Verdict 7/10

It's not perfect, but it could make money in the future

- PURE RACE BREEDING, CHARACTER, INVESTMENT
- NEEDS SET UP TIME, POOR FUEL CONSUMPTION

ALSO CONSIDER THESE:

HONDA SP-2

Private
£3,700

Dealer
£3,800

If it's the shape and idea you like rather than the investment potential the SP-2 is a better machine and looks mint in white

Engine 999cc, I/c, 8v V-twin

Power 133bhp @ 10,000rpm

Torque 102Nm @ 8,000rpm



DUCATI 916

Private
£4,400

Dealer
£4,600

Still a few about but one day these equally iconic machines could be worth a pretty penny, get a standard one if you can

Engine 916cc, I/c, 8v V-twin

Power 114bhp @ 9,000rpm

Torque 90Nm @ 6,900rpm



DUCATI 999

Private
£4,600

Dealer
£4,600

A better bike all round than the Honda except when it comes to the not so small matters of reliability and wow factor

Engine 998cc, I/c, 8v V-twin

Power 138bhp @ 9,750rpm

Torque 109Nm @ 8,000rpm

