

makes the NS so sure-footed on twisting two-lanes also provides a marvelously comfortable ride. With fork air pressure set to 0 psi and rear-spring preload set to 2 turns, the 400 devours most pavement irregularities; even abrupt, sharp-edged bumps or freeway expansion joints fail to upset the Honda's poise.

The motor also adapts well to everyday urban living; it usually starts with one or two prods at the kickstarter, and warms up quickly. The rubber-mounted vee-three won't rattle your fillings loose, either, some vibration filters through the footpegs above 7500 rpm, but it's not intrusive, and the buzzing coming through the grips never gets beyond the level of that generated by a jar full of honeybees. There is, however, one shortcoming in the NS's behavior, and it's the same bugaboo that plagues most liquid-cooled, fully faired motorcycles: engine heat. When you're blasting through the canyons you hardly notice it, but once you're stuck in traffic it feels like someone dropped a hot rock in your lap. Though the heat isn't as bad as on some bikes, it can make you wish for the wide open spaces after a stretch in the stop-and-go urban environment.

But the NS could leave you parboiled like a lobster and it *still* would be worth the ride, strictly on the strength of its apex-clipping ability. Even if you had to keep it chained to your garage floor six days a week, a single day skimming over serpentine blacktop would con-

## Ride Review

vince you that it was all worthwhile, because this is a motorcycle that can make bevelled boot toes and duct-taped knees a way of life. And for those riders who think the only route to the street should be through a racetrack paddock, the NS400R has the credentials—both on paper and in fact. It's more than a stunning middleweight; it's one of the most capable sportbikes ever to arc through a sweeper.

Best of all, though, the NS doesn't suffer from the kind of one-dimensional, narrow-focus stance that can take the glitter off a brilliant sportbike by making it a chore to live with. In fact, the NS is a remarkably complete motorcycle, and one hell of a good streetbike. So while some might lament the fact that Honda didn't simply put lights on Spencer's world championship-winning NS500, we don't—because the NS400R is a better sportbike. What we do lament, however, is that you can't get it here.

—Jerry Smith

No one knows how close I came, while riding Honda's NS400R, to ... not ... coming ... back. I was out there on one of my favorite ribbons of two-lane blacktop, having just a grand time, pitching the thing into corners, doing long, high stoppies, and wheelieing out of every first-gear turn I could find. In fact, I was having such a good time that I didn't want to stop. The NS can do that to you, because it's one of those rare, completely responsive motorcycles that executes your every command, quickly and directly, without introducing any variables of its own.

So why did I decide to come back? Conscience, I suppose. But I know one thing: If I'd just kept going, no one could have caught me. At least, not unless they were on another NS.

—Charles Everitt

When I went out testing on the NS, I had Yamaha's FZ750 along—and that was my first mistake. That's partly because I'm positively in lust with the FZ's engine, and I also enjoy having to participate in herding a bike around corners. I like a demanding motorcycle, but I don't get much of a feeling of participation when I ride the NS400R. The Honda is so light and agile that all you really need to do is steer and keep the engine on the pipe. But for some that might be the NS's saving grace. You see, the 400's engine is not only fast but fairly wide-band, and combines with the plush suspension to make the Honda a genuinely accommodating motorcycle. Considering the NS400R's Rothmans-flavored racebike-replica plumage, I expected—I wanted—something much less civilized. Thanks, but for my thrills, I'll take an FZ750.

—Marc Cook

But the NS could leave you parboiled like a lobster and it *still* would be worth the ride, strictly on the strength of its apex-clipping ability. Even if you had to keep it chained to your garage floor six days a week, a single day skimming over serpentine blacktop would con-

venient to use.

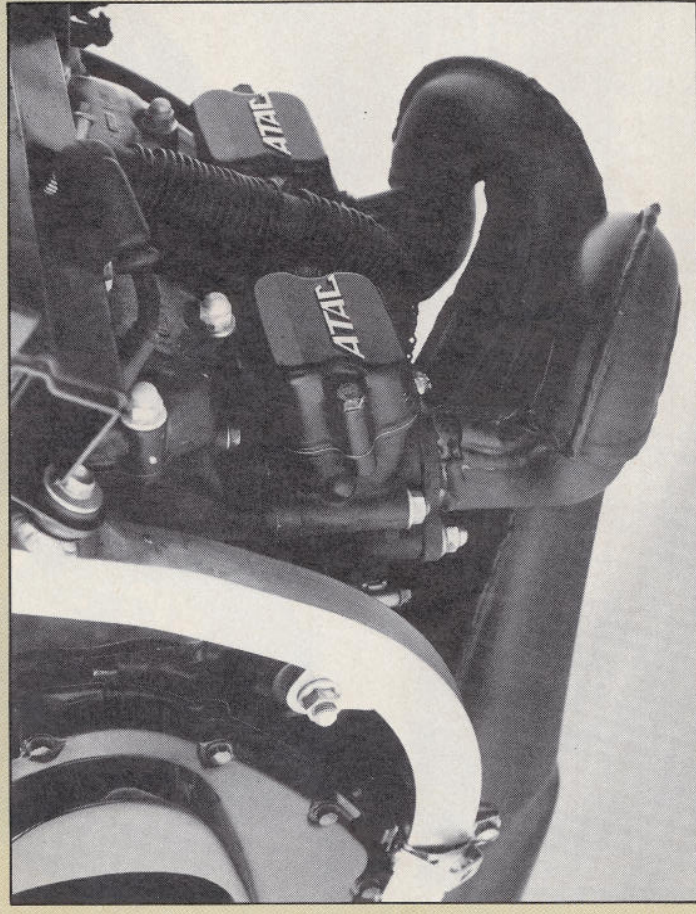
- No-maintenance battery.

**Nits:**

- No permanently attached centerstand, and shop-type centerstand is inconvenient.
- Fork legs are not interconnected for air adjustment.
- Grips are soft and comfortable.
- Large-capacity oil tank.
- Knob adjuster for rear spring preload is convenient to use.
- No-maintenance battery.

**Picks:**

- Grips are soft and comfortable.
- Large-capacity oil tank.
- Knob adjuster for rear spring preload is convenient to use.
- No-maintenance battery.



Auto-controlled Torque Amplification Chamber operates on front cylinders only. Honda's ATAC goes two on one.

# CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

## Honda NS400R

street

**MANUFACTURER:** Honda Motor Co. Ltd., 27-8, 6-chome Jingu-mae, Shibuya-ku, 150 Japan

**SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:** \$629,000 (\$2620)

### ENGINE

Type liquid-cooled two-stroke  
 90 degree vee-three  
 Port arrangement one bridged, reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers and one exhaust per cylinder  
 Bore and stroke 57.0mm x 50.6mm  
 Displacement 387.4cc  
 Compression ratio (corrected) 6.7:1  
 Engine redline 10,750 rpm  
 Carburetion three 26mm Keihin rectangular slide/needle

Air filter washable oiled foam element  
 Lubrication oil injection  
 Starting system primary kick  
 Ignition transistorized breakerless  
 Charging system 12-volt; 160-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 4-ampere-hour battery

### DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive straight-cut gears; 2.481:1 ratio  
 Clutch wet, multi-plate  
 Final drive #530 O-ring chain (3/8-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.500:1 (40/16) ratio  
 Gear Internal Overall gear ratio 1000 RPM  
 I 15.506 4.65  
 II 1.714 6.78  
 III 1.333 8.268  
 IV 1.111 6.891  
 V 0.965 5.985  
 VI 0.866 5.371

### SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front Showa air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter/4.5 in. (114mm)  
 Rear single Showa shock, 10mm spring preload range within 13 1/4 turns of adjuster/4.2 in. (106mm)

### BRAKES

Front dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 9.7-in. (247mm) effective disc diameter  
 Rear single-action hydraulic caliper, 8.5-in. (215mm) effective disc diameter

### TIRES

Front 100/90V16 Dunlop K625A tubeless  
 Rear 110/90V17 Dunlop K625 tubeless

### DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight 392 lbs. (177.8kg)  
 Weight distribution 48.2% front, 51.8% rear  
 Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) 800 lbs. (363kg)  
 Load capacity (with full fuel tank) 376 lbs. (170kg)  
 Wheelbase 53.9 to 55.4 in. (1370 to 1407mm)  
 Seat height 30.7 in. (780mm)  
 Handlebar width 25.4 in. (645mm)  
 Footpeg height 13.9 in. (352mm)

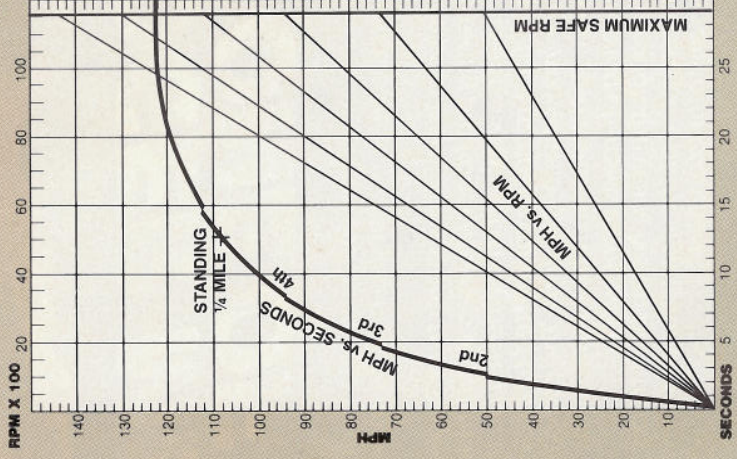
Ground clearance 5.1 in. (130mm), at expansion chamber  
 Steering head angle 27.1 degrees from vertical  
 Front wheel trail 3.94 in. (100mm)  
 Frame box-section and tubular aluminum, double front down tubes  
 Oil capacity 1.9 qt. (1.8l)  
 Fuel tank steel, 5.1 gal. (19.2l), including 1.3 gal. (4.9l) reserve  
 Instrumentation speedometer, odometer, tripmeter, resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge

### PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range 23 to 38 mpg (10 to 16 km/l)  
 Average fuel consumption 29 mpg (12 km/l)  
 Cruising range, maximum 117 to 194 miles (189 to 312km)  
 Cruising range, reserve only 30 to 49 miles (48 to 79km)  
 Speedometer error, 50 kph indicated 45 kph actual  
 Speedometer error, 100 kph indicated 90 kph actual  
 Best 1/4-mile acceleration 12.410 sec., 107.77 mph (173 kph)  
 Top speed (observed) 122 mph (196 kph)  
 Stopping distance from 30 mph 35 ft. (10.7m)  
 Stopping distance from 60 mph 135 ft. (41.1m)

### WARRANTY: N/A

**AVAILABLE COLORS:** red-white-blue-and-yellow, red-white-blue-and-gold



All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.