

1981 Honda Cx500 Custom S Cx 500

1981 Honda Cx500 Custom S Cx 500 The Honda CX500 Custom A Cult Classic Redefined The Honda CX500 launched in 1978 wasnt an immediate sensation Its unique Vtwin engine and shaft drive while innovative initially struggled to capture the hearts of riders accustomed to more traditional motorcycle designs However the 1981 model year particularly the introduction of the CX500 Custom often referred to as the CX500 Custom S or simply CX 500 marked a significant shift in its public perception This article delves into the nuances of this intriguing machine exploring its history technical aspects and enduring appeal

A Revolution in Style and Substance

The CX500 Custom built upon the foundation of its predecessor refining its aesthetics and enhancing certain aspects of its performance While retaining the innovative shaft drive eliminating the need for messy chains Honda significantly altered the motorcycles styling The Custom sported a longer sleeker profile a lowslung seat sweptback handlebars and a more minimalist aesthetic than its standard sibling This shift towards a cruiserstyle design proved crucial in attracting a wider audience transforming the CX500 from a niche offering into a bona fide contender in the burgeoning custom motorcycle market

The 1981 model year didnt involve drastic mechanical changes to the engine itself the air cooled 497cc Vtwin remained the core of the machine However subtle refinements to the carburetors and other components contributed to improved throttle response and slightly increased power output making it a more enjoyable ride The reliability inherent in Hondas engineering remained a key selling point solidifying the CX500 Customs reputation for durability

Key Features of the 1981 Honda CX500 Custom

- Shaft Drive** Eliminated the need for chain lubrication and maintenance resulting in a cleaner and more refined riding experience
- 497cc Vtwin Engine** A unique and relatively smooth engine for its time offering a good balance of power and fuel efficiency
- Custom Styling** Lowslung seat sweptback handlebars and a minimalist aesthetic differentiated it from the standard CX500
- Comfortable Riding Position** The relaxed ergonomics made it suitable for longer rides
- Relatively Lightweight** Making it agile and easy to handle even for less experienced riders

Beyond the Basics

Understanding the Mechanics

The heart of the CX500 Custom the 497cc Vtwin engine is a marvel of engineering Its unique 80degree Vtwin configuration combined with the use of a single overhead camshaft SOHC delivered a surprising amount of power for its displacement The engines characteristics lean towards smooth and torquey making it particularly suitable for cruising Unlike some highrevving engines of the era the CX500s power band is more concentrated in the midrange contributing to a relaxed and enjoyable ride

The shaft drive system while less common than chain drive in motorcycles at the time provided a number of advantages Firstly it eliminated the need for chain lubrication and adjustment reducing maintenance considerably Secondly it contributed to a quieter and smoother riding experience minimizing the vibrations often associated with chaindriven motorcycles However this system also introduced a degree of inherent drivetrain loss slightly reducing the engines power delivery to the rear wheel

The handling of the CX500 Custom thanks to its relatively lightweight design and well balanced chassis is generally praised as being surprisingly nimble This makes it a suitable machine for a variety of riding situations from city commuting to weekend rides on winding country roads

The Enduring Appeal of a Cult Classic

Despite not being an immediate sales blockbuster the Honda CX500 Custom has achieved a cultlike following in recent years This resurgence in popularity can be attributed to several factors Firstly the motorcycles

unique styling with its blend of classic and modern design elements continues to resonate with riders seeking something different Secondly the relatively low cost of acquiring a used CX500 Custom makes it an attractive option for budgetconscious enthusiasts Thirdly the bikes relative simplicity makes it a rewarding project for those interested in customisation and restoration The thriving online community dedicated to the CX500 also plays a crucial role in its enduring appeal Owners share advice parts and modifications fostering a sense of camaraderie and ensuring the continued availability of support and resources This collaborative spirit further enhances the motorcycles appeal fostering a strong sense of community among its enthusiasts

3 Key Takeaways

The 1981 Honda CX500 Custom represents a significant evolution of the original CX500 model Its unique blend of shaft drive Vtwin engine and custom styling set it apart from its competitors Its reliability and relatively simple mechanical design make it a popular choice for both experienced and novice riders The CX500 Customs affordability and strong online community contribute to its continued popularity Its smooth power delivery and comfortable riding position make it an ideal choice for cruising

Frequently Asked Questions FAQs

- 1 Are CX500 Customs reliable Yes Hondas reputation for reliability holds true for the CX500 Custom With proper maintenance these motorcycles can last for many years
- 2 Are CX500 Customs easy to work on Relatively yes The design is relatively straightforward compared to modern motorcycles making maintenance and repairs accessible to mechanically inclined owners
- 3 What are common problems with CX500 Customs Common issues include carburetor problems electrical gremlins and potential issues with the final drive shaft Regular maintenance can help mitigate these problems
- 4 How much does a used CX500 Custom cost The price varies greatly depending on condition and mileage However they are generally considered an affordable classic motorcycle
- 5 What makes the CX500 Custom unique Its unique combination of a smooth Vtwin engine shaft drive and distinctive custom styling sets it apart making it a unique and soughtafter classic motorcycle

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