

Daniel Heggem, SOHC4 #112, tells his story as an owner of a CB400F.

The Honda CB400F is not for everyone. Why would a guy who has been riding one and liking it for three years say something like that. Well, it is true. Let me tell you what a CB400F rider/owner is like:

- You love classic motorcycles.
- You like to work on your own bikes.
- You know how to ride; this is not a beginners bike.
- You like attention, because you'll get it.

The Honda CB400F is a direct offshoot of the Honda CB750 line of motorcycles. The CB750 made a major impact on the motorcycle market. It was smooth, powerful and offered features only found on racing motorcycles of the time. Like it's bigger stablemate, the CB400F caused a sensation when it was introduced in 1975. Not only with it's high-revving, jewel-like 408cc engine, but with it's styling. The low bars, rear-set footpegs and the swoopy four-into-one exhaust system made it a favorite of the let's go faster crowd. Unfortunately, at the time, it was not a big seller. The CB400F enjoyed a brief production run from 1975 to 1977. The 1977 offered higher handle bars and forward-mounted foot pegs. It was finally replaced in Honda's lineup by the twin-cylinder CB400 Hawk.

When you first swing your leg over the CB400F your first impression is, this bike is small. It's light too, weighing in at just under 400lbs. It starts up instantly with the choke on by electric start or kick start. After about one minute or so it is warm enough to turn the choke off and it settles into a nice SOHC idle. Clutch in and snick it into first gear and you're off. The first impression of this bike on the road is, small and light. Some will find that it is twitchy, that is, it changes directions by just thinking about changing directions. This is great for seasoned riders but beginners find it uncomfortable.

Going up through the gears you will find one of the smoothest best working transmissions on a motorcycle, period. No big effort to change gears and no false neutrals. It is a good thing the tranny works so well because you do have to use it. Keeping the revs up over 6,000 rpm is a must to keep your speed going. From about 6,000 rpms to it's redline of 10,000 rpms things really start to happen. This bike will cook for you.

If you consider buying a CB400F there are a few things to look for. There are many nice examples out there. Be patient, you will find a good one. Low miles always wins. These motorcycles are 20 years old and will more than likely need some work. The first major problem starts with those great looking exhausts. If they were not cared for properly, they are prone to rust. The rust will be so bad as to render them useless. Look for rust bubbling up from the muffler surface and rust at the weld joint where the muffler and pipe join. Either one would be considered in the bad things category and necessitate a new exhaust system.

The other mechanical problem to look for is cam chain wear. The cam chain tensioner is not robust. It needs attention. After about 10,000 miles the tensioner and guide need to be changed. If this is done the cam chain will be happy for another 10,000 miles with adjustments at 2,000 miles. This is not a hard job. If you adjust the cam chain and the cam chain noise can still be heard, you have a problem which may call for an engine tear down to replace the cam chain. Even if you do your own work, this will cost \$200.00 in parts.

Other things to look for are oil leaks around the cylinder head, wear to the swing arm bushings, front disc brake piston seizing in the caliper body, and improper carburetor jetting with non-stock exhaust. Spare parts are plentiful but on the expensive side. It helps to know how to work on you own bike.

Prices are good on a CB400F. It's enough of a classic that you can buy a non-runner for \$200 to \$400 put some money and effort into making it a fine example and ask \$1,000 to 2,000 in return. You will not get rich doing this. You will have loads of fun and have a great little bike to ride. Which I believe is the point.