

FIVE EASY RIDERS

Honda V45 Sabre Yamaha 750 Seca Honda CB750F
Suzuki GS750F Kawasaki KZ750F

Which 750 is Best?



The precarious way in which Highway 1 clings to the mountains along the West Coast makes it ideal for testing motorcycles. It squirms and wiggles above the ocean for 1000 miles, sometimes so close that salt spray hits you in the face. Highway 1 is more than a dyno, more than a lap time, and more than the tensile strength rating of a frame tube. Highway 1 goes beyond the laboratory and the Chrondeks to a purer measure of performance—it tells whether the motorcycle brings confidence and skill to the rider. Other roads may do the same thing, but not with such scenery, variety, and legend as the writhing ribbon at land's end.

Motorcycles of 750cc's are equally special. They've got enough displacement for serious performance (12.2 in the quarter-mile), yet the chassis is small enough to deliver nimble handling akin to a middleweight. Any one of the following five easy riders can quietly tour a continent or gallop through a canyon like a flash flood. Today's 750cc motorcycle is an extremely satisfying combination of power and size.

The bikes tested are "standard" models—the ones which father both the cruiser and super-sport versions from the same manufacturer. The five-day, 1800-mile test was organized by our sister publication, *Motorcyclist*, and HOT ROD went along with camera and notepad. Because it was cold, we fitted the bikes with clear plastic windshields. To carry a week's worth of gear, we used soft saddlebags, which worked perfectly. Most of the bikes shrugged off the accessories as if they weren't there. And so did the riders, who set a pace that wore out tires and melted the grease on all five speedometer needles.

After the trip, each rider answered a detailed questionnaire for ranking the five bikes. These scores, plus the group's subjective consensus, determined the ultimate rankings. *(continued)*

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Honda V45 Sabre

This is the odd bike out because it's so different in looks, feel, design, and performance. It's a 90-degree water-cooled V4 with 16 valves, 10.5:1 compression, a hydraulic clutch, fiber-optic anti-theft system, on-board computer, overdrive sixth gear, digital instruments, and Honda's wonderful TRAC anti-dive forks. It's a technical showoff with the longest list of trick features by far.

Unfortunately, the Sabre on our test was a lemon. It had endured a solo road test previously, so its tires weren't fresh and the clutch was beleaguered by 14 runs at the dragstrip. Add a windshield and luggage (which seemingly didn't affect the other bikes), and the poor Sabre ended up with a slipping clutch, a wobbling chassis, and unhappy riders. Even so it had the smoothest engine and best brakes.

After the test, HOT ROD put 400 miles on a second Sabre, which turned out to be far superior, and a fine motorcycle overall. The Vee engine pulls hard, the chassis steers accurately, and there's plenty of ground clearance. However, the seat gets hard in an hour, and heat from the radiator broils your legs on hot days. This is a new model in 1982 and not yet fully refined. Our ranking on a scale of 1 to 10 is an 8.5.

Yamaha 750 Seca

When the Yamaha made its debut a year ago, it made technical history with the first on-board computer, the first anti-dive, and the first quarter-mile in the elevens for a 750. This season it seems to be slower (12.59 at the strip), and the anti-dive still enjoys only partial success. The rest of the machine is excellent. It pulls heavy votes from those who like its swoopy styling, which cleverly integrates conventional seating and boulevard lines.

Because of an engine layout that places the generator in back of the cylinder block instead of outboard on the end of the crank, the Seca is the narrowest of the in-line fours. It joins the Kawasaki in feeling the smallest, and handles remarkably well on Highway 1 for a shafty with jacking effect and extra driveline lash. To weigh only 521 pounds with shaft-drive is a noteworthy engineering achievement that contributes to the Seca's agility. The engine is smooth, gutsy, and quiet. This is a superior motorcycle that scores 9.4, which ties it with the Honda CB750F.

Honda CB750F

This is the benchmark by which all the others are compared. It has technology (16 valves, dual-puck discs), performance (12.3 in the quarter), and an enviable record of raves from the motorcycle press. It's been around in this configuration for four years, so there are no bugs. ComStar wheels and integrated

HOT ROD MAGAZINE Bike Specifications

Honda V45 Sabre

Price.....	\$3398
Engine Type.....	4/S Liquid V4
Claimed HP.....	78 @ 9500 rpm
Carburetion.....	(4) 32mm Keihin CV
Ignition.....	Electronic
Transmission.....	6-speed
Final Drive.....	Shaft
Wet Weight.....	539 pounds
Brakes.....	Twin discs/drum
Fork.....	Air/spring, anti-dive; 5.5-inch travel
Shocks.....	Honda Pro Link, 4.2-inch travel
Quarter-Mile.....	12.32 @ 106.3 mph
Average MPG.....	37.6 mpg

Honda CB750F

Price.....	\$3048
Engine Type.....	4/S DOHC Four
Claimed HP.....	75 @ 9000 rpm
Carburetion.....	(4) 30mm Keihin CV
Ignition.....	Electronic
Transmission.....	5-speed
Final Drive.....	O-ring chain
Wet Weight.....	561 pounds
Brakes.....	Triple discs
Fork.....	Adj. air/spring, 6.3-inch travel
Shocks.....	Adj. twin Showas, 4.3-inch travel
Quarter-Mile.....	12.30 @ 106.8 mph
Average MPG.....	41.8 mpg

Kawasaki KZ750E

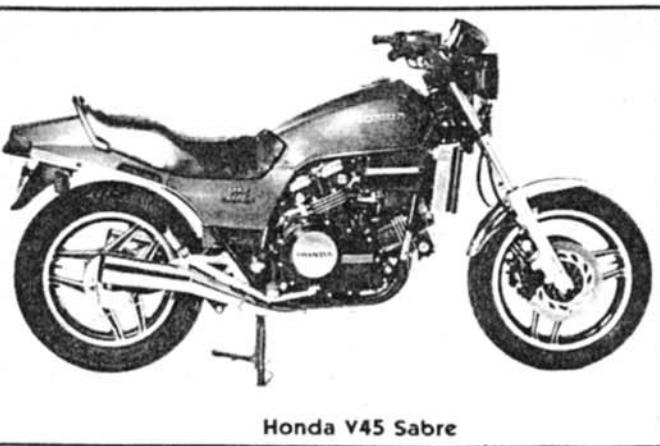
Price.....	\$2999
Engine Type.....	4/S DOHC Four
Claimed HP.....	74 @ 9000 rpm
Carburetion.....	(4) 34mm Keihin CV
Ignition.....	Electronic
Transmission.....	5-speed
Final Drive.....	O-ring chain
Wet Weight.....	500 pounds
Brakes.....	Triple discs
Fork.....	Adj. air/spring, 6.3-inch travel
Shocks.....	Adj. twin Kayabas, 3.7-inch travel
Quarter-Mile.....	12.22 @ 108.6 mph
Average MPG.....	42.9 mpg

Suzuki GS 750E

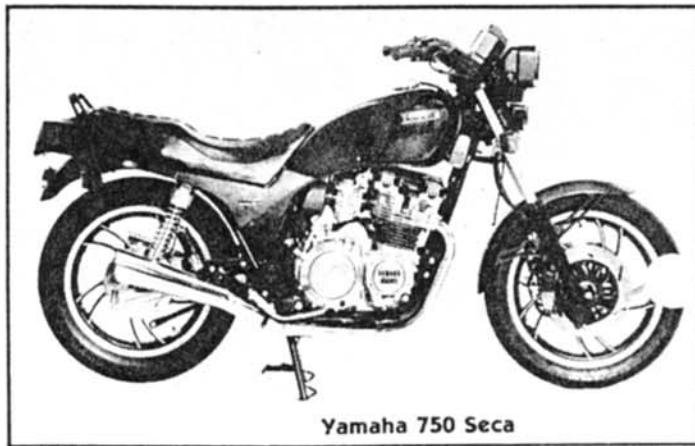
Price.....	\$3099
Engine Type.....	4/S DOHC Four
Claimed HP.....	No claim
Carburetion.....	(4) 32mm Mikuni CV
Ignition.....	Electronic
Transmission.....	5-speed
Final Drive.....	O-ring chain
Wet Weight.....	541 pounds
Brakes.....	Triple discs
Fork.....	Adj. air/spring, 6.3-inch travel
Shocks.....	Adj. twin Kayabas, 4.2-inch travel
Quarter-Mile.....	12.28 @ 107.0 mph
Average MPG.....	42.5 mpg

Yamaha 750 Seca

Price.....	\$3299
Engine Type.....	4/S DOHC Four
Claimed HP.....	76 @ 9000 rpm
Carburetion.....	(4) 32mm Hitachi CV
Ignition.....	Electronic
Transmission.....	5-speed
Final Drive.....	Shaft
Wet Weight.....	521 pounds
Brakes.....	Twin discs/drum
Fork.....	Air/spring, anti-dive; 6.3-inch travel
Shocks.....	Adj. twin Showas, 4.2-inch travel
Quarter-Mile.....	12.59 @ 104.7 mph
Average MPG.....	41.1 mpg



Honda V45 Sabre



Yamaha 750 Seca

bodywork, including a spoiler on the tailpiece, still look slick... and fast.

The Honda is big, which makes it spacious and comfy, but also adds weight. At 561 pounds, it was the heaviest of the five. Excellent steering geometry, tires, and suspension make the "F" an outstanding handler, but you can still feel its weight and size. Passengers prefer the roomier quarters.

Honda has always extracted horsepower through high revs, so the 750F has less mid-range pull than the others. But the engine is smooth and, once on the cam, a real charger. Its proven reliability and ease of maintenance are added attractions. Check the price, too. You get a lot of motorcycle, and tradition, for \$3048. Here's a good buy that rates a strong 9.4.

Suzuki GS750E

The Suzuki can easily be overlooked in this crowd because its styling, though tight, is very conservative, and its technology, though modern, contains no breakthroughs. Skipping over the GS would be unfortunate because its components harmonize to produce an overall package two testers voted No. 1. It easily won the comfort category, and only the Kawasaki got higher handling marks.

Like the Honda, the Suzuki is larger and feels big. Adjustable suspension, rated best overall in compliance, and neutral steering make the weight disappear in corners, which can be taken at remarkable lean angles. The GS is stable and predictable on all of Highway 1's swervery, from sweepers to corkscrews. Its anti-dive front end, like the Yamaha's, is marginal at best and needs further development. The engine has a strong mid-range and revs forever, pulling hard all the way. Four valves per cylinder nestle in a contoured "TSCC" combustion chamber which swirls the mixture for faster burning. The Suzuki's



great versatility and overall efficiency rank it a tiny cut above the Honda and Yamaha at 9.5.

Kawasaki KZ750E

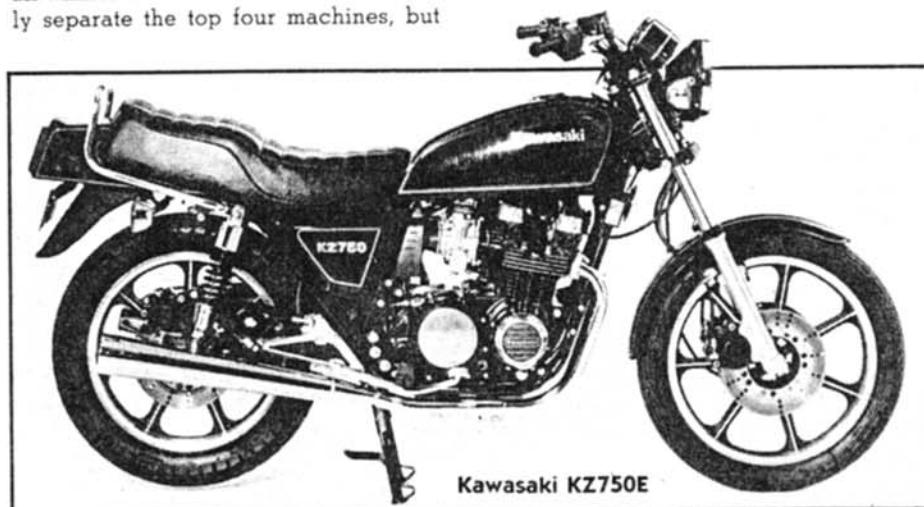
Here comes the most mundane machine of all—very dull styling (it's the "Universal Japanese Motorcycle"), no exotic tech credits, no anti-dive, no computer, and no gizmos on the dash. It doesn't have 16 valves or five-spoke wheels. What it does have is the quickest quarter-mile, the fastest quarter-mile, the best mileage, the lightest weight, the highest score for handling, and the lowest price. It is these numbers that gave the KZ a 9.6 rating and made it the overall winner. A human backside can barely separate the top four machines, but

an adding machine can, and that's how the Kawasaki won.

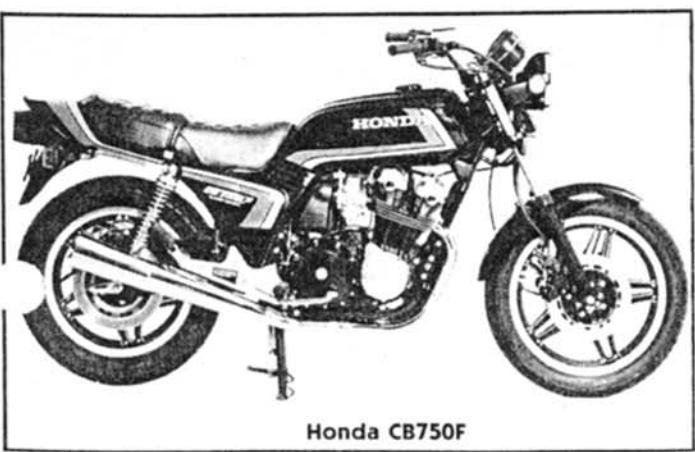
Like the Yamaha, the KZ is small and nimble. Part of its strong engine performance comes from an excellent power-to-weight ratio. It's a little crowded for larger riders on a long trip, and it needs more ground clearance. The only other complaint was uninspired styling.

CONCLUSION

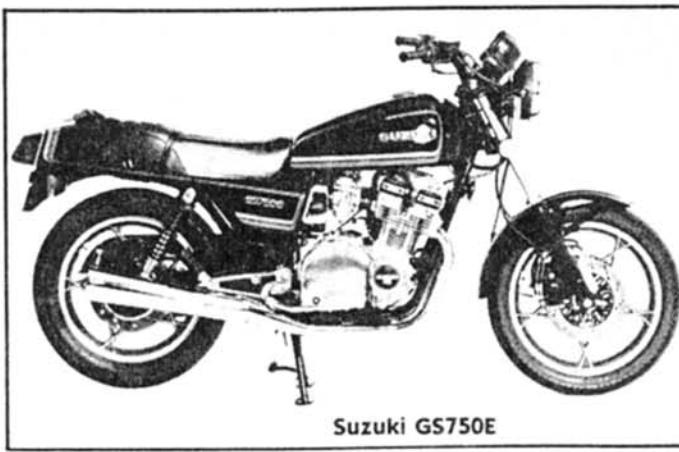
The best road is always most enjoyable on the best motorcycle. Five bullets ricocheted up and down Highway 1 during this shootout, and there wasn't a slug in the bunch. That's why we all had five easy rides. **HR**



Kawasaki KZ750E



Honda CB750F



Suzuki GS750E