

AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE MAGAZINE BIKE



**MOUNTAIN
GOAT**
ROYAL ENFIELD'S
450 ROCKS
THE HIMALAYAS

ISSUE 25

UNIVERSAL
MEDIACO

AUS \$14.95*
NZ \$14.95 (Both incl. GST)

25

ISSN: 2209 - 2374



HUSKY TREK: RIDING LIKE DEVILS IN THE TASMANIAN WILDERNESS
CUNNING STUNTS: MILES DAVIS TAKES BMW'S R 1300 GS TO THE WORLD
OVERLAND OVERLOAD: WISE ADVICE FOR RIDING OVERSEAS
T7 RALLY: RIDING CENTRAL NSW WITH THE TÉNÉRÉ BROTHERHOOD
DESTINATION: DIVING INTO THE DSMRA'S NUNDELE RUMBLE
PROJECT BIKE: BUILDING A \$33,000 YAMAHA T7 WORLD RAID

MOUNTAIN GOAT



The small-bore ADV wars are heating up, and Royal Enfield is aiming to grab a big slice of the action with its totally updated but bargain-priced new Himalayan 450. We went all the way to the Himalayas – where else! – to ride the new thumper.

STORY ANDREW CLUBB PHOTOGRAPHY TOM FOSSATI & MATT HAYMAN

Slicing through a watery twin-track high in the Himalayas, with snow-capped peaks all around. This is precisely the riding Royal Enfield's new Himalayan 450 was designed for, and it does it well.



New Himalayan 450 in the landscape in which it was designed for: the mountains of the Himalayas.

Well, this review took a sudden turn the day before final deadline. And it was a turn for the better, because almost six weeks after we jetted across the world to ride Royal Enfield's all-new Himalayan 450 in the Himalayas — yes, THE Himalayas — Urban Moto Imports, the Australian RE distributor, finally announced the introductory price of their new pride and joy.

But first, let's set the stage here, for the current Himalayan 411 is one of the new bike bargains of the ADV world: it's been priced from \$8,390 ride-away for ages. And it has won an almost cult-like following with small-bore ADVers all around the world, for a bike that was originally designed to be a workhorse for the domestic Indian market.

After riding the new Himalayan in the majestic mountains of northern India, the only detail we didn't take away from the global media launch was, what exactly would the new 450 cost? Which we can all agree is a rather key detail in the grand scheme of things, right?

So we were left to ponder, and my take was, if Royal Enfield could put the Himalayan 450 on Aussie showroom floors with a price tag under \$10,000 ride-away, the brand-new bike will ace it.

Bugger me ... as it turns out, UMI and RE have ultimately done way better than that, for the new 450 will be priced at \$8,990 ride-away. For a brand-new model that has been significantly advanced in every aspect when compared to the old model, that meagre \$600 increase makes this bike an absolute bargain.

Anyone who has been a fan of the Himalayan 411 is going to be frothing like a kid unwrapping their birthday presents when they get a chance to experience the new 450. The updates between the two models are massive, yet it now turns out that the increase in the price of admission isn't. Royal Enfield and UMI were clearly keeping that ace up their sleeve.

REWRITE THE RULEBOOK

When Royal Enfield says the Himalayan 450 is a brand-new bike, they mean it. Absolutely nothing is shared in common with the previous 411. The design team started with a clean sheet of paper, and it shows. And how's this? They started working on this new 450 immediately after the old 411 was first released to the world, almost eight years ago.

The heart of the new Himalayan is the Sherpa — now there's an appropriate name if ever we heard one — powerplant. The 452cc thumper is water-cooled (a first for a Royal Enfield machine) and it runs a DOHC top-end and six-speed gearbox. A 42mm throttle body controlled by ride-by-wire feeds the motor, which puts out 40hp at 8,000rpm and maximum torque of 40Nm at 5,500rpm. Now, those figures become really significant when compared to the old LS411 motor, which delivered 'just' 24.3 horsepower and 32Nm torque.

A choice of Performance and Eco ride modes are offered, and with each mode there's a further 'Off-Road' option to turn off ABS to the rear wheel.

The Sherpa powerplant is carried as a stressed member in an all-new twin-spar tubular steel frame with bolt-on rear sub-frame. Suspension duties are handled by a Showa SFF 43mm-diameter USD fork, while at the rear there's a canted linkage-controlled



Clay design model shows the real differences between the original Himalayan 411 and the new 450.

THE NEW 450 IS MORE POISED
AND COMPOSED THAN THE 411,
BOTH ON THE TAR AND DEFINITELY
IN THE DIRT.



Keep left, Clubbman! Not every day of the week you get to charge a track carved into the side of a cliff, with a hundred-foot drop off the edge to the river below. Welcome to the Himalayas!

single-shock with adjustable preload collar. Suspension travel front and rear is 200mm.

Wheel sizes are 21-inch front and 17-inch rear, with CEAT Gripper tyres the standard fitment. Standard seat height is 825mm, although the rider seat can be adjusted up to 845mm. There's also an optional low seat that offers a choice of 805mm/825mm seat

heights. Meantime, ground clearance comes in at 230mm.

In the braking department the 450 boasts Bybre brakes, with a single large 320mm diameter disc up front and 270mm disc at the rear.

FILL ME UP

The 450 packs a larger 17-litre fuel tank that Royal Enfield claims offers from 400 to 450km fuel range. Like the previous model, crash bars are fitted around each side of the fuel tank and also double as soft luggage mounting points. Located under the fuel tank is the air filter — you remove the fuel tank and then remove three screws from the air box lid to access the standard paper filter element.

By moving the air box to under the fuel tank, the mid-section of the 450 has been totally reshaped and slimmed compared to the old 411. The battery and major electrical components are located under the 450's

seat, while the restyled mid-section offers much more modern seated and standing ergos alike, in contrast to the sit-in-me and tight ergos of the 411. Once again, the new Himalayan comes fitted with a handy rear carry rack that incorporates sizeable pillion grab handles.

LED lighting throughout is a feature of the 450, highlighted by a round-shaped headlight once again, while out back there's no traditional stop-tail light assembly — instead the rear indicators include the stop and tail light functions.

'APPENING PLACE

The flight deck of the 450 is dominated by a brand-new round four-inch TFT display that combines speedo/tacho/ride info functions and warning lights. It also includes Royal Enfield's new Tripper function that gives you full map navigation powered by Google Maps, along with phone connectivity and



New Sherpa motor breaks new ground, being water-cooled and running DOHC and a six-speed gearbox.



Trademark crash bars on each side of the fuel tank continue and are ready with loop points for soft bags.



Muffler is slim and compact, exiting from a larger collector box under the swingarm.



Round TFT dash with Tripper navigation set-up gives the Himalayan a distinctive flight deck.

the ability to control your music via Royal Enfield's dedicated app.

Detail fittings include beefy steel foot pegs that come fitted with removable rubber inserts, while the muffler is extremely slim and short by virtue of a pre-cat and cat being snugly tucked into the exhaust mid-section under the motor and beneath the swingarm pivot. There's a lightweight alloy/plastic skid plate combo that offers some protection of the bike's under-carriage, while a centrestand is standard equipment. A slim screen is fitted above the headlight, but there are no hand guards fitted to the alloy big bars.

Last, but by no means least, the Himalayan 450 weighs in at 181kg dry, or 196kg wet with a 90 per cent load of fuel and fluids. For a 450 single, the Himalayan is no lightweight, but those figures do include the aforementioned crash bars and centrestand, while the bike certainly looks to be built strong, in typical Royal Enfield tradition.

A BIG DEAL

The Himalayan 450 is a big deal to Royal Enfield — a really big deal. And the Indian brand went all out when it came to launching the new bike to the world's media. Hundreds

of media reps from all around the world were flown to the village of Manali in northern India, which is perched at 2,000 metres elevation at the foothills of the Himalayas. RE created a 'base camp' for the launch by carving into a hillside adjacent to the plush Welcom Hotel. It was an impressive setting, majestic mountains punching skyward all around the site — but more exciting was getting the chance to ride the new bike in those very mountains.

First impressions of the 450 are that the bike is chalk and cheese different to the 411. It's still a small and low machine in the overall ADV bike landscape, but the 450's ergos, fit and feel are way more modern than the 411. You can stand up and ride the 450 like a dirtbike, whereas the 411 always felt tight and cramped and made you want to sit down more. Setting the 450's standard rider seat into the high position at 845mm seat height helped the bike to fit me like a glove.

The Sherpa motor fires into life readily and settles into a consistent idle, and as soon as we rolled out of the car park and headed into the mountains to start the launch, it was gob-smackingly obvious how much more performance the 450 motor is packing. Power

and torque are dramatically increased over the 411, not just on the spec sheet, but by the seat of the pants also, and the new Himalayan is way more responsive and so much more fun to ride. As soon as we hit the streets through the local villages, the improved engine response and power delivery were abundantly clear. Whereas the 411 would wheeze its way forward under acceleration, by comparison the 450 barks and launches forward, which made you feel more confident in the crazy Indian traffic.

Royal Enfield were quick to advise us that riding at the altitude we would be — mostly between 3,000 and 3,500 metres elevation — where oxygen levels are thinner, engine performance would be impacted. That may have been so, but none of us ever felt like the engine's performance for a 450 single was lacking. Far from it. The stronger and more immediate power delivery of the 450 was one of the bike's most redeeming features. It was a fun motor to ride.

A six-speed gearbox helps make the Sherpa's engine performance all the more versatile, with the motor happy to both lug and rev. The ratios are sweetly spaced, and with narrow winding roads dominating the



USB power outlet is a must for charging your phone while riding when running RE's Tripper app and navigation.

Himalayan landscape, a huge portion of the ride was spent in second/third/fourth gears, plunging in and out of snaking sweepers and tighter hairpins. Holding gears and revving, the motor would keep making drive, topping 102km/h in third gear at peak revs, with three more gears to go. On a number of occasions, the speedo topped 130km/h and there was plenty more to be had — only the fast approaching corner on a cliff with no guard rail, or a cow in the middle of the road, or an oncoming bus with locals clinging to the sides and roof, would cause you to button-off, not any lack of performance.

Interestingly, the difference between Performance and Eco modes was vast. I only tried Eco the once and never went back. But it might be appropriate for novice riders who will benefit from toned-down throttle response.

All up, the Sherpa powerplant impressed. It was rideable and forgiving yet strong and lively, shifted sweetly with its slipper clutch and was fun to ride. For a 450cc thumper that will be performing ADV duty, it's going to be a satisfying ride for the majority of buyers. And it absolutely leaves the old 411cc motor in the shade.

UP & DOWN

If you've ridden the Himalayan 411, you'll appreciate it's not the sharpest tool in the shed for off-road work. The 450 changes all that. The new bike is more poised and composed, both on the tar and definitely in the dirt. You can ride the 450 like a dirtbike, thanks in no small part to the totally revised ergos that have you sit on the bike rather than in it like the 411. Of course, the 450 is no featherweight at just under 200kg wet, but the bike carries its weight well and it feels way more modern and confidence-inspiring to ride than the old bike.

On the mountain roads both the fork and shock remained composed, without the

deep diving you get under heavy braking on other small-bore ADV bikes. Even with my hulking 100kg frame onboard, both the fork and shock coped admirably, not only on rough and lumpy tarmac but dirt roads as well. I was surprised by just how well both ends performed, given the only adjustment you have for the suspension is spring preload on the shock via a C-spanner included in the bike's toolkit. There's no damping adjustment available at either end.

I managed to bottom the fork on a sharp-edged hit, but throughout the ride the 200mm of travel front and rear impressed. We rode a long dirt road/track that was cut into the side of a cliff with rock wall on one side, mighty drop to the river below on the other, and stacks of baby-head rocks poking up out of the ground in the wheel tracks. It was the kind of track where concentration on line choice was key, and it showed precisely why a bike like the Himalayan is so at home. You could concentrate on the ride, confident the bike wasn't going to get out of line and throw you over the edge, whereas much larger ADV bikes would have you sweating bullets all the time if things got out of shape.

On the second day of the ride we repeatedly rode an off-road area for photography. Here, amongst obstacles that included creek beds, bogs, twin track and rock farms, the newfound off-road capabilities of the 450 were rammed home. It's an easy bike to ride and manoeuvre in techy conditions, way more so than a multi-cylinder bike. And for a lot of ADVers, that is going to spell real appeal.

Just keep in mind though that although there's 230mm of ground clearance, there's just a thin layer of plastic and alloy acting as a skid plate beneath the engine, while the pegs, rear brake pedal and gear shifter are all low hanging as well. Sure, there's more clearance

AS SOON AS WE HIT THE MOUNTAINS, THE IMPROVED ENGINE RESPONSE AND POWER DELIVERY WERE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR.



Even at altitude, the Sherpa engine delivered enough output to make carving mountain roads a barrel of fun.



Rider seat is height adjustable and is well shaped to be comfortable for all day riding.



Standard alloy/plastic skid plate combination is only suitable for gravel protection.



17-inch rear wheel, along with 21-inch front, allows for a wide choice of rubber to suit specific riding conditions.



Rear rack and pillion grab handles is a handy standard fitment.



Standard suspension set-up proved way more capable of handling spirited off-road riding than the old 411 ever was.

down there than the 411 ever offered, but I still managed to catch the rear brake pedal on a rock — thankfully, being steel it could be tweaked back into place.

THE FINE PRINT

21- and 17-inch wheel sizes are perfect for this bike, meaning owners have a wide variety of rubber to choose from. The stock CEAT tyres worked fine on the tar and even dry dirt surfaces, but on wet dirt they soon showed their limitations. Road-legal knobbies will only boost the 450's off-road capabilities.

The ability to switch off ABS to the rear wheel paid dividends off-road, and I rode the bike like that any time we hit the dirt. And yes, you have to be stationary to activate the Off-Road modes.

Royal Enfield claims around 27km per litre fuel economy for the 450, and while we couldn't measure the fuel we used each day, I'm feeling the figure is legit. Which suggests the new 17-litre tank will offer a range to dry of up to 450km, which is more than respectable.

Royal Enfield's Tripper nav and connectivity system is a big step up in tech for the Himalayan. We were given smartphones preloaded with the Royal Enfield app and the route we were riding in Google Maps. It synced to the bike easily enough, and then after a few button presses the route would be displayed on the new round TFT screen. But the phones had to be left 'live' — that is, not buttoned

off — and tethered to the bar-mounted USB connection to keep them from chewing through battery power. The set-up worked seamlessly, but the Tripper set-up can't display a GPX route — only Google Maps routes.

There's a choice of five colour variants, and get this: the colours of the 450 have been selected to reflect the natural elements of the Himalayas. I scored a Kamet White model resplendent with a snowflake treatment, while the black/gold scheme scored plenty of votes amongst the ANZAC media pack.

As far as overall appearance and styling goes, the 450 looks way more modern than the old model, yet it still retains that retro overland vibe the 411 has become renowned for.

As part of the new-model tech presentations at base camp, Royal Enfield displayed a couple of kitted 450s loaded with optional accessories. There was a touring model sporting hard luggage, crash bars, a bigger screen, hand guards and more. And there was a rally version, which certainly caught our attention. This bike featured a taller single-piece seat, taller screen, headlight guard, protection and replacement rear guard and side plates to fit below the rear sides of the seat to allow the mounting of throw-over style soft luggage.

Hey, what's this?! Royal Enfield used the EICMA Show in Italy late last year to spring a real surprise by showing the Him-E battery-powered Himalayan, giving a glimpse into the company's electrifying future.



THAT'S A WRAP

After two days and almost 400km of riding across a vast range of conditions, I came away impressed by the Himalayan 450. It was an easy bike to ride, it was never intimidating, and it is just so much more powerful, refined and poised than the previous model. More than all that, though, it was fun to ride. And it will be fun to ride for riders of varying ages and abilities.

Remarkably, Royal Enfield has sold over 200,000 Himalayan 411s since the bike was launched, and this new 450 is fast going to surpass that number in its lifetime.

As I said at the outset, at \$8,990 ride-away, the Himalayan 450 has fired a very serious shot in the small-bore ADV wars and clearly Royal Enfield is ready to take on all-comers. Let the games begin! **AAB**