

# Sub 125

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Bikes, news, skills and advice  
for lovers of small motorcycles

## ROAD TEST

# Half pint

The D-Tracker 125 is a half-size 125cc anomaly that sits barely noticed in Kawasaki's current line-up. Could it be the way into biking for the shorter rider?

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First things first: the D-Tracker is short... and weird (weird because it's short). I'd understand if it was a 50 dressed up as a 125 but it's the other way round. I'm only 5ft 7in and found it small but surprisingly roomy; anyone taller will feel like they're on a monkey bike.

Being able to place both feet flat on the floor and tip a 114kg bike right over is confidence-inspiring, great for learners. It looks and feels like a cross between a mini-moto and a supermoto – a true hybrid.

It has a clear dash with an odometer, clock, digital speedometer, low-fuel warning light, trip meter and rev counter. In general, the build quality is good with sturdy big-bike switchgear, USD fork, petal brake discs, and handy helmet lock. It's

the laughably small rims and 14-inch wheels that make you look twice.

### Get going

Yep, you guessed it; you're not going to be flying along at 70. Top whack is an indicated 64mph with elbows tucked in and chin on the 'bars at max power in ideal conditions. Even then a side-wind can throw you off-course with little effort.

But fire the little hound into life, dump the clutch and it feels right, like a mini supermoto should. The rear tyre squeals and a little puff of smoke bites at your ankles. Cane it through the gears, stay away from dual carriageways and you'll be laughing all the way to your mate's house. The little 14in tyres are sticky enough to make back lane bends full-throttle fun, and while the 10bhp on tap won't blast you away it's smoothly fuelled and enough to put a smile on your face.

### Full fat

So how does this fit in with our

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benchmark 125 supermoto, you ask? The Adrenaline is a full-size 125cc supermoto from Chinese firm Pulse (sister brand of the better-known Lexmoto). For half the money you get double the size. This bike will hit 70; throw up more blue smoke than the D-Tracker from bad-ass wheelspin and you won't have to worry so much about car drivers not seeing you.

Sure, in comparison the parts are clearly cheaper and overall quality is lower than the Kwak, but £1499 for a new supermoto is rather attractive. It looks the part and has all the moves you'd expect with a few pretty parts thrown in, such as a bash-plate, collapsible gear lever and rear brake pedal, a gear indicator and adjustable rear damper. Don't expect greatness but do expect a laugh. The single 230mm wavy disc and twin-piston caliper does a good job of stopping from the front, while the rear drum makes light work of locking up the back tyre. For sheer kudos, the Pulse is more likely to set hearts racing – and was great to thrash.

### Verdict

The D-Tracker is an easy way into biking for a new rider, especially one who struggles with a higher seat. It's unthreatening, easy to use and won't bite your head off. But if you're a quick or even moderately paced learner, then boredom is likely to set in fast. But the £3099 price can't be justified. It's like a Mars bar sold in Harrods.

If you're after a gentle and reassuringly soft way into motorcycling, on a Japanese bike that's styled like a supermoto and has a hefty price tag, then the D-Tracker's the one to go for. For the extra money you will be buying the peace of mind that comes with a Japanese-made machine.

The Pulse, meanwhile, represents a far more appealing package for the hooligan rider. It has a little more fire in its belly and is great value for money.

### WHAT'S THE STORY?

Why is the Kawasaki D-Tracker 125 half the size of competitors yet twice the price? Curiosity demands we give it a go. For good measure we brought along the Chinese made, fully-fledged 125 Pulse Adrenaline – double the size and half the price.



Easy-to-ride D-Tracker won't top 70mph – the Adrenaline will and it'll save you £1600



Thrash it and stay off dual carriageways and D-Tracker will bring out the smiles



Clockwise from top left: D-Tracker's neat digital instruments. Single-cylinder motor pumps out 10bhp. D-Tracker looks tiny alongside the Adrenaline. Kawasaki D-Tracker's stylish high-level exhaust



### EXPERT OPINION

LIAM MARSDEN  
WEB PRODUCER



Adrenaline single pulls well with smooth throttle response

Attractive price, but little niggles and likely hefty depreciation

The Pulse Adrenaline doesn't feel like it costs £1499. These cheap copies have come a long way in the past couple of years and in isolation there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with this one – the pillion grab handles feel especially solid.

The real test will be how it holds up over a year of commuting. While it felt okay on this test, there are little niggles. The gold paint on the bars of our test bike was flaky in places; the right hand switchgear slightly loose and the headlight unit appeared to be held on by two loose fitting mounts.

The bike rides well, and the carb-fed motor pulls, with lovely and smooth throttle response. If you're a bit short you may struggle: it has a rather high seat height of 890mm.

One major downside will be the resale value. The Pulse won't hold its value like a Japanese-made equivalent.

### THE FACTS

KAWASAKI D-TRACKER 125, £3099

Engine:	125cc, air-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke, 2v, SOHC, chain drive, five-speed
Claimed Power:	10.2bhp
Torque:	7.38ftlb
Chassis:	Steel perimeter
Suspension front:	35mm USD forks, non-adjustable, 150mm travel
Suspension rear:	Non-adjustable monoshock
Front wheel:	100/80-14
Rear wheel:	120/80-14
Front brakes:	Single 240mm petal disc, twin-piston caliper
Rear brake:	Single 190mm petal disc, single-piston caliper
Claimed top speed:	62 mph
Kerb weight:	114 kg
Seat height:	805 mm
Claimed MPG:	75 mpg
Fuel capacity:	7 litres
More info:	www.kawasaki.co.uk

RATING ✖✖ ✔

### THE FACTS

PULSE ADRENALINE 125, £1499

Engine:	125cc, air-cooled, single-cylinder, four-stroke, 2v, SOHC, chain drive, five-speed
Claimed power:	11.3bhp
Torque:	10.7ftlb
Chassis:	Steel perimeter
Suspension front:	USD forks, non-adjustable
Suspension rear:	Monoshock, adjustable damper
Front wheel:	110/70-17
Rear wheel:	130/70-17
Front brake:	Single 230mm wavy disc, twin-piston caliper
Rear brake:	175mm single leading drum
Claimed top speed:	65mph
Kerb weight:	127kg
Seat height:	890mm
Claimed mpg:	113mpg
Fuel capacity:	10.6 litres
More info:	www.pulsemoto.co.uk

RATING ✖✖✖ ✔

### NEXT WEEK

HONDA C90  
THE WORLD'S  
BEST TOURER



## TOP 5: TASTY MOPEDS



**1** Honda Dream 50  
From £4895 (used)  
A 71kg work of art. This late-90s extravagant tribute to Honda's 1960s racers isn't road legal, yet you couldn't take it on a trackday either. But you'll find somewhere.



**2** Yamaha FS1-E  
From £3000 (used)  
To 2013's teens it probably looks as cool and modern as a mangle. For the rest of us, it's a saviour of the 70s, an icon of that first taste of freedom. Good examples command premium prices.



**3** Aprilia RS4 50 Replica  
£3271 (new)  
Any 16-year-old aspiring to be a World Superbike hero knows there's only one moped to have: this twin-spar aluminium frame, water-cooled two-stroke rep.



**4** Rieju MRT 50LC Pro Competition  
£3299 (new)  
Not just another big-wheeled 'ped, but a proper race enduro with adjustable suspension and highly-tuned two-stroke Minarelli engine.



**5** Italjet Dragster D50LC  
From £450 (used)  
The most radical-looking scooter ever. The trellis frame gives a hint of Ducati, its hub-centre steering and front shock a taste of Bimota.

## WHAT EXPERIENCE WILL TEACH YOU

# 11. Night Rider: staying safe

Riding once the sun has disappeared over the horizon presents additional hazards.

Foremost is being dazzled by oncoming traffic. Sometimes there's nothing you can do about it, but most of the time it can be largely mitigated by a bit of planning. Headlamps sweeping across



Mileage man

Richard Newland  
MCN Senior Editor, with over 400,000 miles of road riding experience, in all conditions

a scratched and fly-splattered visor causes starbursts of fractured light, rendering you near-blind in an instant. Keep it clean, and if it's badly scratched, cough up for a new one. If your visor is Pinlock compatible, make sure it's fitted. As temperatures fall at night, you're more likely to suffer visor misting problems.

Bike headlamps are often designed to look good, not to provide a carpet of light to ride into, so ensuring that they're clean and properly adjusted will have a significant impact on your visibility. If you've got a 2009 R1 – you're snookered. If you've got a K1600GT with adaptive headlamps – you're laughing. If you've got an old bike, and the headlamp is a dull yellowing glow, then clean up the earth and other connections, to improve brightness.

Be wary of overtaking on straight roads with hidden dips, or passing other vehicles when you can't see far enough ahead to be sure of a safe pass. You can't assume that it's safe to pull out just because there's no ambient glow moving towards you. Be massively wary of single headlamps approaching, too. Only 2% of the traffic on our roads are motorcycles, so the approaching single headlamp is far more likely to be a car with a lamp out than another two-wheeler. That realisation has saved me several times.

Avoid the natural temptation to look directly at oncoming vehicles, try to keep your focus to the left of anything

approaching, especially on tight country lanes where it's easy to lose sight of the edge of the road, and end up off-piste. Use road furniture to help you. Kerbs often reflect back well enough to give you a line, as do phone lines or overhead power cables. Hedges tend to be the blackest part of the unfurling landscape, also tipping you off to the curve of the road ahead. Catseyes are an added bonus.

If a dozy driver is approaching on main beam, give him a couple of sharp bursts of yours, but don't try to out-blind them, they might veer into your path. Above all, slow down if the road ahead isn't clearly visible.