

REVIEWS: Yamaha T-Max 500



REVIEW BY HEIN JONKER

If you combined two parts scooter with one part touring bike and added a touch of sport bike, you might come up with a power scooter; a swollen, big-engine scooter with plenty of storage space. Yamaha's new TMAX power scooter hits the roads offering sportbike-inspired styling and commuter-friendly features.

The TMAX is equipped with a 499cc fuel-injected parallel-twin engine, 43 mm telescopic forks, and dual-calliper, four-piston front brakes - some pretty serious equipment. Both wheels are cast aluminium 15-inchers mounted with 120mm rubber up front and 160mm rubber at the rear. The TMAX also incorporates a parking brake that sits tucked along the handlebar. A large muffler runs along the bike's right side, and a die-cast aluminium frame holds everything together.

With a fuel capacity of 15 litres which works out to a theoretical cruising range of 290km—a number which no doubt could be higher if it weren't for a motorcycle-like wet weight of 203kg. The TMAX's storage space includes two glove boxes, and a big saddle which folds up with twin hydraulic struts, revealing abundant under-seat storage.

Scooters benefit from a step-through design that enables easy in and out access and their layouts usually allow for a variety of seating postures. Your feet can rest flat or up against the tilted floorboards.

The TMAX reveals a fairly spacious but somewhat firm perch, and a small notched but adjustable "backrest". The cockpit offers a somewhat tall windscreen and mostly analogue gauges, with the exception of an LCD bar graph tachometer.

Crank the throttle and right off the line the TMAX offers decent acceleration, but once you get past the mild section of the torque curve, midrange power kicks in and pulls more strongly. Pin the throttle, and acceleration gets more intense at higher revs; mid and upper-range acceleration will satisfy and surprise lots of riders who might not expect a scooter to move so quickly.

Once you reach highway speeds, the TMAX's 15 inch wheels provide confidence-inspiring handling that you just don't find with smaller scooters. Handling is nimble for such a relatively big bike and the surprising upside of the TMAX is its ability to soak up potholes with ease; a vast improvement over smaller scooters.

Brakes are operated by two levers; the left the rear brake, and the right the front. The four-piston, dual disk front brakes offer strong stops, though it's a shame the TMAX doesn't offer the option of ABS which would make skid-free stops a sure. The TMAX is surprisingly capable, both around town and on longer rides. Its riding dynamics are stable, confidence inspiring, and supple and its blend of power and handling will surprise most red-blooded motorcyclists.

If there's one characteristic that dominates the Yamaha TMAX's personality, it's the element of surprise. The beauty of this ride is its versatility; it's easy to ride slow, quietly self-assured at high speeds, and has the composure to handle the potholes and rough surfaces that plague most city roads. And on top of all that, it's got power to spare and more cargo capacity than most motorcycles.

The TMAX's only catch is its image, and many hardcore riders will find it hard to overcome that stigma. But if you're secure enough to straddle this maxi scooter, you'll enjoy a bike that strikes an impressive balance between comfort and performance. And there's nothing embarrassing about that.

PRICE: R85 000.00 - Incl. 14% VAT



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