

2010 Victory Cross Country Road Test

In The Malibu Hills Twisties Overlooking the Pacific

Photos and text by the Canyon Carver



We live in a crazy world. Consumer confidence is shaky, unemployment has hit double-digit percentage figures and the world economy is still bogged down in a near-depression. In this down-in-the-dumps economic landscape, motorcycle manufacturers big and small hunker down in their shuttered factories to lick their wounds. They scale back production numbers to match a drastically reduced demand and drop models from their lineup in an effort to streamline operations until things get better.

Knowing this, I didn't expect to see more than a few derivative models or some re-badging from the OEMs for 2010. That was until I heard about Victory Motorcycles. The American manufacturer from Minnesota had not one, but two entirely new bikes hitting the streets in time for the second decade of the millennium. Enter the Victory Cross Roads and Cross Country, a pair of non-identical twins that could help cement the company's presence in the hard-bagger segment.



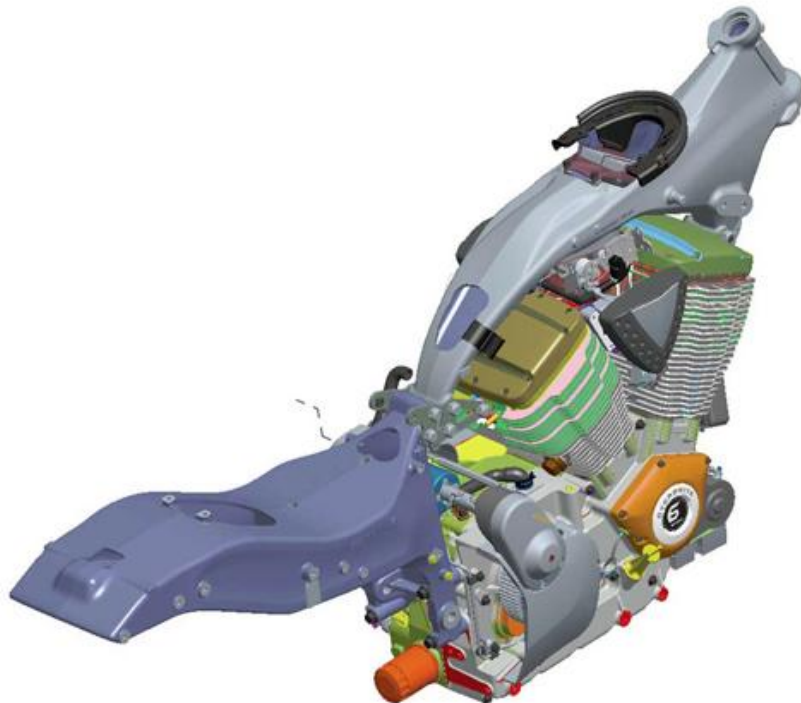
We gave you an in-depth look at these two models a few weeks ago on Bikernet, but now it's time to put tire to pavement and see what Victory's newest touring rig can do. Victory wanted to make sure I have the full bagger experience and delivered the fully-faired Cross Country to our office.



If on the whole, I appreciate the comfort and amenities touring bikes have to offer, I also wish they contained better handling and performance in a stock form. Why spend your hard-earned green on an average motorcycle, only to sink untold amounts of cash in upgrades? Victory seems to agree with my statement; with the Cross Country (and with its cousin the Cross Roads), the manufacturer is visibly striving to offer a performance touring model designed with enhanced power, handling and style, way over comparable bikes on the market.



Overall the Cross Country is 104.4 inches long and 39.5 inches wide, weighing in at 800 pounds in working order. The bike's massive size and weight are evident when wrangling it around the garage, so look out you as you maneuver in and out of parking spaces. Fortunately the combination of 29 degrees of fork rake, a neck placed aft of the fork tubes (more trail and stability), and wide handlebars with ample leverage make low-speed handling a breeze. Adding confidence to this experience, the Cross Country's seat height of only 26.25 inches will undoubtedly please riders with shorter inseams. I practiced feathering the clutch while getting a feel for bike's balance, and was able to deliver clean, no-foot-down U-turns in no time. It came in handy when making multiple passes in front of the photographer for our riding shots...



Tucked away under the tank and seat is the bike's unique frame. First appearing on Victory's CORE prototype last year, this setup is said to make the Cross Country the lightest bike in its class, with the highest load capacity. The hollow, two-piece cast aluminum structure can be described as a boxed spine. It may not be pretty but it was never meant to be. In fact it was designed to use the engine as a supporting member, providing added frame stiffness for improved control and handling. Eliminating

customary bottom sections and down tubes also gives the Cross Roads and Cross Country increased cornering clearance. Obviously this isn't pop's bagger and we're not in Milwaukee anymore, Toto.



From what I can see this new frame arrangement is working wonders. The bike exhibits quick—yes, quick—steering response. It will lean hard and deep with surprising ease, and without scraping metal at every corner. The suspension is air-adjustable in the back, using a supplied hand pump with pressure gauge. I adjusted the pressure in preparation for an athletic experience and headed to the mountains for an extended weekend ride. Although not adjustable, the inverted front fork is very effective in all regular riding conditions and under braking, giving a sense of confidence that made me want to manhandle this big mama. No more put-putting through the gorges at 15mph for me; I found myself wringing the throttle and throwing the Cross Country around like it was a sport bike. Woo-eee!



Speaking of throttle, you can let plenty of beans out of that can: 92 horsepower and 109 foot-pounds or torque to be precise. Yeah, baby! The 50-degree, 106-inch Freedom V-twin is the right tool for the job. With its four-valve setup featuring overhead cam, a self-adjusting cam chain and hydraulic lifters, it has a broad power range that's well distributed by the 6-speed overdrive transmission. On a less favorable note though, the drivetrain still exhibits a rather clunky and noisy operation we've become familiar with other Victory products. I wonder if the gear primary might be the culprit here, needing some sort of compensator to smooth things out. I am looking at you, Victory engineers!



Touring bikes are made to let you cover long distances; the Cross Country certainly has that potential but its short windshield was obviously a design-only choice. As a result strong buffeting takes place above 55mph, and it can get tiring quickly. If that bothers you as much as it bothered me, Victory offers a windshield that's 5 inches taller and should remedy that problem.



Behind the bars I felt a little less Country and a whole lot more Rock 'N Roll as I peeled pavement all day long. The sound system enhanced the experience too. Backed up by the four horsemen of Metallica, I rode in style thanks to the integrated radio with provision for auxiliary input. It's part of the blue back-lit, sports car-inspired dashboard. It gets louder as your speed increases to compensate for road and engine noise—and that's nifty—but the stock speakers have a plasticky tone and lack bass rendition. I also found that the switches that let you operate the radio and cruise control from the hand controls, look like a cheap, bolt-on accessory. Something more integrated into the hand controls would be cool.



Available in Solid Black or Solid Midnight Cherry, the Cross Country can be your for \$17,999. It's also available with optional Black/Graphite Extreme Skulls graphics. Equipped with the latter visual package our test bike was a sight to behold and turned out to be a real show stopper. A small crowd of dog walkers, joggers (and even the mail man) gathered to take a closer look at the sculptural Cross Country, as it was unloaded from Victory's trailer. And later, a similar scene would play out whenever I stopped at gas stations and rest stops along the Pacific Coast. Everyone from fellow bikers and motorists, to mere pedestrians, wanted a closer look. The skull paint job appealed to

many, but it's these "diamond-cut" lines used over many of the body parts that really tickled people. The stretched shapes of the gas tank, rear fender and hard bags help give this massive bike a more slender look and counterbalance the visual mass of the head fairing. Kudos go to Victory's design department for giving the classic touring bagger platform a very contemporary style.



After a few days and many miles on the Cross Country I can say it's a bike I could see myself owning because it's so versatile; they could have called it the Swiss Army Bagger. It's powerful, it can comfortably haul you, a passenger and loads of gear for hundreds of miles between refuels and it looks like no other touring bike on the road today. However, what brings it home for me is how nimble the bike is when riding solo. You can really have fun with it, throw it into curves and smile as it responds to your mere thoughts...

Visit the Victory Motorcycles website by clicking on the banner and schedule a test ride.

—Canyon Carver



2010 Victory Cross Country Specifications



Driveline

Engine Type 4-stroke 50o V-Twin

Cooling Air / oil

Engine size 106 ci / 1731 cc

Bore/Stroke 101 x 108 mm

Compression Ratio 9.4 : 1

Valve Train Single overhead camshafts with 4 valves per cylinder, self-adjusting cam chains, hydraulic lifters

Fuel System Electronic Fuel Injection with dual 45mm throttle body

Fuel Capacity 5.8 gal / 22 ltr Reserve 1.0 gal / 3.8 ltr

Exhaust Split dual exhaust with crossover

Oil Capacity 5.0 qts / 4.75 ltr

Charging System 50 amps max output

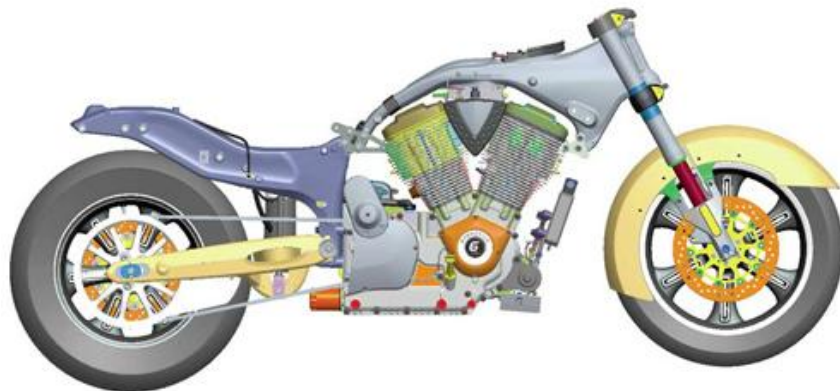
Battery 12 volts / 18 amp hours

Primary Drive Gear drive with torque compensator

Clutch Wet, multi-plate

Transmission 6-speed constant mesh

Final Drive Carbon Fiber Reinforced Belt



Chassis Dimensions

Length 104.4 in / 2652 mm

Wheelbase 65.7 in / 1670 mm

Seat height 26.25 in / 667 mm

Ground Clearance 5.8 in / 148 mm

Rake/Trail 29.0o / 5.6 in / 142 mm

Dry Weight 765 lbs (347 kg)

Wet Weight 800 lbs (364 kg)

Overall Width 39.2 in (995 mm)

Overall Height 53.2 in (1352 mm)



Suspension

Front Fork: 43mm Inverted cartridge fork
 Travel 5.1 in / 130 mm
 Rear Suspension Single, mono-tube
 Swingarm Cast Aluminum with constant rate linkage
 Travel 4.7 in / 120 mm
 Adjustments Air Adjustable

Wheels

Front Brakes Dual 300mm floating rotor with 4-piston calipers
 Rear Brake 300mm floating rotor with 2-piston caliper
 Front Wheel 18 x 3.0 in
 Rear Wheel 16 x 5.0 in
 Front Tire 130/70R18 Dunlop Elite 3
 Rear Tire 180/60R16 Dunlop Elite 3



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