



CFMoto's U550 LE and X550

offroad vehicles

by Russell Pitkin

With a windscreen and roof as standard, the U550 LE offers protection from the elements when out in the field for an extended time.

CFMoto is a name I have been hearing a bit of lately and I regularly see some of the company's vehicles for sale in various showrooms around Victoria. I have been considering the purchase of a four-wheeled hunting carrier for some time, so I jumped at the opportunity to go along to the recent release of the CFMoto U550 LE Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) and X550 All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) at the Melbourne 4WD Training and Proving Ground in Werribee to find out more about the brand and the newly available UTV and ATV.

While the Chinese-created franchise has actually been around for

about 25 years, CFMoto is starting to make a real name for itself as a competitively priced, quality alternative to the existing manufacturers of ATVs and UTVs, as well as motorcycle and marine products. The company has grown to be the largest exporter of ATV/UTV vehicles in China, with an annual worldwide tally of around 600,000 and sales revenue of \$US270 million in 2014. CFMoto currently occupies 7.5 per cent of the Australian UTV/ATV market and is looking to double this in 2015.

The Melbourne 4WD Training and Proving Ground turned out to be the perfect place to launch the new CFMoto vehicles, with 80 acres

of tracks and trails, including river crossings, hill climbs and descents, and rocky and sandy terrain. So there was to be plenty of opportunity for putting the vehicles through their paces in an environment in which they are most likely to be used.

The U550 LE UTV

After a brief presentation about the CFMoto company and products, we were given a rundown on the two newly released vehicles and then taken on a couple of guided loops before being allowed free rein on the tracks with our choice of carrier. I opted to take the U550 LE UTV first, as I feel this has more potential for

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use as a hunting accessory, with its side-by-side seating arrangement, covered roof and windscreen, electronic power steering and a heavy-duty winch, as well as the capacity to tow. The UTV also has a gas-assisted tipping tray in the rear, capable of carrying up to 230kg, which would be handy for loading hunting gear, transporting dogs or for retrieving game.

We were informed by the CFMoto staff that the trend in Australia is swinging more towards these types of transportation, as opposed to the traditional ATV, due to the ease of driving, flexibility and functionality of the vehicle, while still retaining the ability to access tough terrain. I have spent a fair amount of time hunting pigs in outback New South Wales and Queensland and these vehicles would be ideally suited to this form of hunting, as they would be with many other outings, including spotlighting rabbits and foxes.

When handling the UTV, it is quickly apparent that the feeling



The X550 in bright orange, displaying its sturdy front and rear racks, pillion backrest and winch, which are all included.

behind the wheel is much more 'driving' than the 'riding' experience of an ATV. Even though the steering wheel is on the left-hand side, this took no time at all to become familiar with. The controls are all user-friendly and the dash includes two 12-volt outlets, which would be handy for a spotlight or charging hand-held UHF radios or

phones. The UTV has selectable two- or four-wheel drive capability, as well as high- and low-range transmission with a lockable differential.

Although I drove the UTV through rivers, up and down steep hills and along off-camber sandy sections, it never looked like becoming stuck and the differential lock was not required.



River crossings and tough terrain were a breeze for the U550 LE to handle.

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RIDE AWAY

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This vehicle would be capable of accessing very difficult terrain. The 500cc engine does like to rev, but the 38 horsepower that the liquid-cooled, fuel-injected engine provides is enough to propel the vehicle to around 80kph, which feels quite fast. The U550 LE is priced at \$12,990 rideaway, which includes features over the base model such as a winch, roof, windscreen, towbar and power steering.

The X550 ATV

On board the X550 ATV, the first thing I noticed was how smooth the ride was. This was most likely a combination of the power steering and the long wheel base, which enables two-up transport, with the pillion having a sturdy (removable) backrest to make the journey more comfortable.

While the ATV has the same engine as the U550 LE, it feels more 'zippy', probably due to the 300kg weight difference. The ATV has the same selectable two- or four-wheel drive capability, as well as the high- and low-range and locking differential and also possesses a descent control system.

The X550 comes with sturdy front and rear racks, which would be handy for stowing gear. An aftermarket rifle



The layout of the U550 LE cockpit with easy-to-operate controls and handy features such as two 12-volt outlets.

scabbard would also be a worthwhile addition for carriers used primarily for hunting.

The X550 is priced at \$8790 rideaway, which includes a tow pack and winch kit and is supplied with indicators, mirrors and a horn as standard, which would be useful for states where vehicles can be registered.

Summary

Both vehicles performed flawlessly during the testing day and manufacturing quality appears to be of a high standard, equal to any other rivals' equivalent that I have experienced. All CFMoto vehicles come with a two-year warranty for added peace of mind and are available from a national network of 80 dealers.

For more information about these two eye-catchers and other vehicles in the CFMoto range, visit www.cfmoto.com.au or phone 03 8363 1600. ●

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The gas-assisted tipping tray with a 230kg payload is a handy addition to the U550 LE. Just pull the lever either side and the tray slowly rises.