



Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin “Baja” Build

A fully-customized *Africa Twin* built to explore the rugged terrain of Baja

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The Honda CRF1000L *Africa Twin* was introduced last year to rave reviews from the motorcycle press. Bucking the trend toward ever-larger and less off-road-capable adventure bikes, the *Africa Twin* set a new course for the industry with its compact, mass-centralized design. And with a package that includes a torquey 998cc parallel-twin engine, off-road wheel sizes and capable chassis, it's an impressive performer in the dirt. Even more impressive, they brought it to market with a reasonable price tag that would cause every competing manufacturer to reevaluate their offerings.

Truth be told, it's hard to knock the value and versatility of the *Africa Twin*, but in order to achieve its aggressive price point, there were some concessions made—primarily in the durability of some components or lack thereof (“where’s the center stand?”). Yet, *Honda* didn’t skimp on the most important parts and the foundation of the bike remains solid. That has made the *Africa Twin* ripe for customizing, especially for those dirt aficionados that want to explore the full potential of the *Africa Twin* off-road.

During our recent trip to *Overland Expo West* we caught up with Kurt Forg t, co-owner of [Black Dog Cycle Works](#), who had a fully-customized *Africa Twin* on display. Kurt was just getting back from their winter headquarters in Baja, Mexico, where he put more than 1,500 miles on the bike scouting for the *Black Dog Baja Trail*. “The route will go from the Tecate Border all the way down to beautiful Mulege on the Sea of Cortez, with multiple track options for riders to put together their own journey based on available time and skill level,” Kurt said as he walked us through his *Africa Twin* build.

“The goal of the build was to armor the bike so it can survive travel over rugged terrain—Baja being a perfect example. Also, to improve the carrying ability of the bike. Lighting is also important for night rides and for improved visibility during the day. This *Africa Twin* can now take a beating and carry what is necessary for extended travel over difficult terrain.”

This *Africa Twin* has been equipped with a selection of **Black Dog Cycle Works** components to improve its durability



and carrying capacity. It also includes a variety of products from other top manufacturers, hand selected to enhance the bike's overland travel capabilities. Kurt has already put the bike's toughness to the test on some of the roughest routes in Baja and now with the bike back home in Idaho,

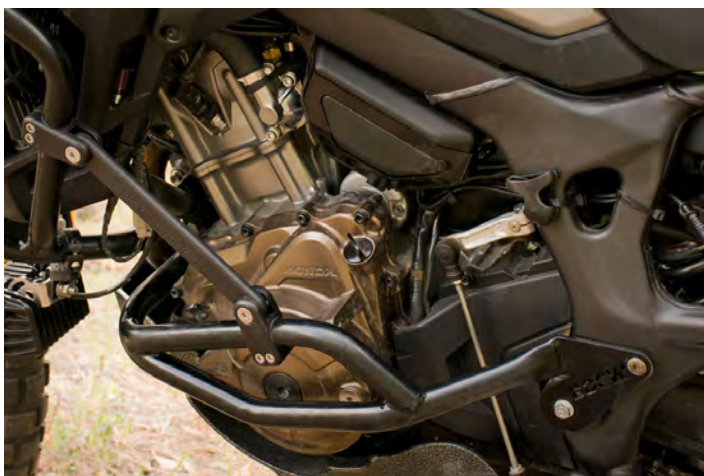
he continues to explore its versatility in the rugged Bitterroot and Sawtooth mountains.

Below is a list of the aftermarket upgrades that make up the *Black Dog Africa Twin Build*.



[Hepco-Becker Upper Crash Bars](#)

One of the first off-road upgrades an *Africa Twin* needs is a good set of crash bars to protect the bodywork *when* the inevitable fall or tip over occurs. *Hepco & Becker Upper Crash Bars* are unique for their double-walled 1-inch steel tubing design that offers increased strength with less bulk. They also feature direct mounting to the frame and a connecting crossbar that helps spread out impacts by transferring them to the opposite side of the bike. A powder coated black finish is also resistant to tarnishing, scratches and rock chips.



BDCW Lower Engine Bars and Connector Rods

A set of lower crash bars are also essential for protecting the *Africa Twin*'s vulnerable engine casings. **Black Dog Lower Engine Bars** are made of 1-inch steel with a 0.83-inch wall thickness and are covered in a tough black powder coat finish. They mount directly to the frame and swingarm pivot for the strongest possible connection, and for extra piece of mind, **Black Dog's Billet Aluminum Connector Rods** help provide additional strength and rigidity to the upper crash bars by attaching them to the lower engine bars.



BDCW ULTIMATE Skid Plate

The thin metal factory skid plate and exhaust header guard provide only minimal protection for parts that are some of the most susceptible to damage and expensive to repair. **Black Dog ULTIMATE Skid Plates** are often considered to be the toughest on the planet and their **ULTIMATE Skid Plate** offers complete protection for both the sump and the low-hanging exhaust header of the *Africa Twin*. It bolts directly to the frame, instead of the engine, and its 3/16-inch 5052 plate aluminum actually helps absorb impacts rather than transferring them.

Designed to closely contour to the underbelly for maximum ground clearance and it features a completely smooth bottom surface that won't snag on rocks or branches. It can also be removed quickly for maintenance with just two bolts. There are two versions of the skid plate—one that is compatible with a center stand and another that is *not* but provides extra coverage for the rear linkage. This *Africa Twin* build was equipped with a factory accessory center stand to make tire repairs in the field less of a hassle.



[Cycra Handguards and Doubletake Adventure Mirrors](#)

Honda was nice enough to include a set of hand guards on the *Africa Twin* but sadly they are made of thin plastic that easily breaks on the smallest of falls. The stock mirrors also won't last long on the trail and sooner or later they will snap off or shatter. It's a good idea to be proactive and replace both with something that can handle off-road abuses. Few hand guards have a reputation for being tough like the *Cycras*. Their frame is made of CNC machined 6061 billet aluminum so they're very hard to bend or distort, and they feature large plastic covers that give excellent protection from tree branches or the wind. *DoubleTake Adventure Mirrors* are another proven off-road upgrade. Designed

to collapse inward out of the way on impact, making them virtually unbreakable. And with stout *RAM* mounting hardware, they provide a stable rear view even when speeds approach triple digits.



[BDCW Radiator Guards](#)

The stock plastic radiator guard may be enough protection against kicked up pebbles on the street but if you intend to venture off the beaten path, you're going to need more than that. Branches and roasted stones can easily breach the stock guard, leaving you with a pierced radiator. And when your sights are focused on the trail ahead, you may not ever notice the warning light on until the engine has fully cooked itself. The aircraft-alloy ***Black Dog Radiator Guard*** is lightweight, durable and offers a significant upgrade in protection. Its precision-cut design also ensures adequate airflow to pass through to the radiator for proper cooling.

[Rigid Dually Side Shooter LED Auxiliary Lights Kit](#)

Rigid Lights are known for their durability and brightness, and their dually LED auxiliary lights have long been a top choice among both automotive and motorcycle off-road enthusiasts. Now the new Side Shooter model brings side illumination to the dually line, allowing you to light up those side ditches and shine light "through" turns. They put out an impressive 3,308 lumens of light with a beam throw of 134 meters, yet only draw 24 watts of power per light. A set of 1-inch ***Black Dog*** mounts come with the kit, giving you the option to mount the lights to the lower or upper crash bars. Also included are a set of snap-on amber light covers that provide better visibility in fog or dust and make the bike stand out more to other motorists.





BDCW Traction Platform Footpegs

We're not sure what Honda was thinking when they equipped the off-road-capable *Africa Twin* with those tiny, flimsy factory footpegs that look like they were sourced from a *CRF50*. Aside from a lack of grip, they cause you to constantly balance yourself on the pegs when standing. The **BDCW Traction Footpegs** provide several advantages: First, they offer a larger platform that provides more stability and leverage for steering the bike with your feet; Second, they feature aggressive serrated teeth that help lock-in your footing on technical terrain, and they come with a set of spikes that can be screwed in for added traction in mud; Third, their unique design extends inward around the footpeg mounting bracket to get your feet as close to the frame as possible for optimal ergonomics and to reduce your chances of catching protruding rocks on the trail; lastly, they're milled from aircraft-grade aluminum alloy, so they are virtually indestructible.



ProTaper Pastrana FMX Bars with BDCW Risers

Tall riders, and even those of average height, often complain about feeling cramped on the stock *Africa Twin* when standing up on the pegs. A set of **Black Dog Risers** really helps open up the riding position and bring the ergos into alignment. The bar risers are made of anodized billet aluminum and are available in either 1" or 2" sizes. And for those that prefer more height and a more aggressive bend, a set of *ProTaper Travis Pastrana* bars (he's 6'2") can provide the extra leverage you need.



[BDCW Multi-Function Rear Rack and Pillion Rack](#)

A solid platform to securely mount your gear is essential for long-distance off-road travel. If you aren't riding two-up, you can maximize storage space by removing the passenger seat and installing a **Black Dog Pillion Rack**. They come pre-drilled for *RotopaX* mounting hardware that allows you to safely transport 1 gallon of extra fuel or water that can really come in handy traveling to remote locations. For even more carrying capacity, the **Black Dog Multi-Function Rear Rack** was added. It bolts directly onto the *Africa Twin*'s stock grab rails, giving you a large flat surface to mount a top bag. Or for those that want to enhance their 'go-anywhere' capabilities, you can bolt on a *WARN XT17* winch! Both the **Pillion Rack** and **Multi-Function Rear Rack** are made of heavy-gauge 1/4-inch aluminum with several oversized tie-down holes to make positioning and strapping loads a breeze.

[Touratech Headlight Guard](#)

The *Africa Twin*'s Dual Headlights are another vulnerability to be aware of because even though many of the bike's parts are reasonable to replace (it's a *Honda* right?), the LED headlight assembly is not. Your buddy's friendly attempt to roost you could result in a bill of more than \$1,100 to replace the stock unit. Not only is it costly, but it could be dangerous if it occurs when you are far from camp and nightfall is quickly approaching. A simple but effective solution is *Touratech*'s Quick-Release Headlight Guard. They're like safety goggles for your bike, made of high-strength *Macrolon* clear plastic that can take a lot of abuse. They're also easily removed for cleaning, so you can get into those hard-to-reach crevices.





[HyperLites' Flashing LED Auxiliary Brake Lights](#)

One of the most common types of accidents for motorcyclist is getting rear ended. If you travel a lot of miles on a motorcycle, improving your visibility from the rear can really improve your odds of avoiding this type of accident. *HyperLites* offer a unique solution. They work as running lights at 30% power during normal driving. Then under braking, they begin to flash at 100% power to really grab the attention of drivers behind you. The small LEDs are extremely durable, lightweight and waterproof. It's an easy way to improve your safety during those adventures into the urban jungle we all take at one time or another.



[BDCW Rear Brake Reservoir Guard](#)

Sometimes it's the smallest part that is the weak link in your armor. And even though the rear brake reservoir on the Africa Twin is somewhat tucked into the frame, it's still vulnerable to side impact during a tip over or the inadvertent kick from a boot. If the plastic reservoir cracks, you've got no rear brake—a real safety concern. On those big trips where sourcing parts can be difficult, it could cause a huge delay. The ***Black Dog Rear Brake Reservoir Guard*** provides extra protection that just might help you avoid being affected by Murphy's Law, and it also adds a nice custom touch to the bike.



[Mosko Moto Backcountry 35L Panniers](#)

A durable, lightweight, soft luggage solution is a must on the remote trails of Baja and *Mosko Moto's Backcountry Panniers* are up to the task. Constructed with a ballistic nylon outer shell and a 100% waterproof PVC removable inner liner, they can take the abuse of rugged off-road rides. A roll-top closure provides easy access to personal items, while six compression straps let you cinch down gear tight when riding through the rough stuff. Combined they offer 70L of internal storage, plus a beavertail stash pouch and rear pocket provide external storage for things you need quick access to. And if you need more capacity, military style MOLLE panels allow you to hook on MOLLE compatible accessories. What's more, you can get the bags on and off the bike in seconds using the quick-mount wedge plates that are bolted onto *Hepco & Becker Side Carrier Racks*.

Aftermarket Parts List	Price USD
<u>Hepco-Becker Upper Crash Bars</u>	\$293.55
<u>BDCW Lower Engine Bars</u>	\$285.00
<u>BDCW Connector Rods</u>	\$160.00
<u>BDCW Ultimate Skid Plate</u>	\$349.00
<u>Cycra Handguards</u>	\$82.95
<u>DoubleTake Adventure Mirrors</u>	\$120.00
<u>BDCW Radiator Guards</u>	\$125.00
<u>BDCW Multi-Function Rear Rack</u>	\$149.00
<u>BDCW Pillion Rack</u>	\$159.00
<u>ProTaper Pastrana FMX Bars</u>	\$74.99
<u>BDCW Risers</u>	\$99.99
<u>BDCW Traction Platform Footpegs</u>	\$229.00
<u>Touratech Headlight Guard</u>	\$119.95
<u>Rigid Dually Side Shooter LED Auxiliary Lights Kit</u>	\$550.00
<u>Hyper-Lite Flashing LED Auxiliary Brake Lights</u>	\$73.95
<u>BDCW Rear Brake Reservoir Guard</u>	\$37.00
<u>Mosko Moto Backcountry 35L Panniers</u>	\$699.99
<u>Hepco & Becker Side Carrier Racks</u>	\$247.75