

Machinery/Technology

Arctic Cat 700 ATV a tough workhorse



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THRIFTY MACHINE: Going up and down mountains, pulling disabled vehicles, or just playing on trails in the heat or snow, the Arctic Cat 700 Auto Diesel is an all-terrain vehicle worth considering for hard work and low fuel usage.

Review

By **DAN CRUMMETT**

ONE of the main complaints you hear from folks about diesel-powered all-terrain vehicles usually has to do with their inability to get out of the way of a lunch-hour mail truck. Arctic Cat's 700 Auto Diesel ends that syndrome.

While you won't find the 700 setting any world land-speed records, it runs fast enough for the workhorse it is. And, off the line, don't stand in the way of this Minnesotan! While weighing in empty at 823 pounds, the 700 Diesel jumps from a dead stop and will top-end in about 10 to 12 seconds, right around 40 miles per hour.

The continuously variable transmission has two ranges, but I wonder why they bothered with a "low" since the long-stroke diesel will handle just about anything in "high." In fact, the only time I used "low" over the machine's five-month stay at our house, was loading it up ramps into the pickup (where it fits nicely) and pulling a disabled 2,700-pound Jeep CJ5 through some mud after an embarrassing U-joint incident. Even on steep mountain trails, the high range had plenty of leverage going up, and excellent engine braking coming down — with two adults on board! (The 700 Diesel is available with a second rider seat and built-in foot rests.)

Power comes from an Italian-made Lombardini diesel engine that will run a very long time on the contents of the vehicle's 5.5-gallon fuel tank. Arctic Cat recommends B20 biodiesel, but the machine also will run on Diesel No. 1, No. 2/JP-5 or JP-8 turbine fuel.

To say the 700 is thrifty is putting it mildly. In the mountains of New Mexico, we took the dark-green machine up three different trails, all leading to or above the timber line. In all, riding double, my wife and I put 38 miles on the 700 with lots of idling stops for pictures and sightseeing.

After those 19 miles up and 19 miles down, we topped it off with 1.8 gallons of diesel fuel. I filled it when we got back to

Oklahoma and three months later, after another 30 miles or so doing chores around our house, there was still well more than half a tank of fuel on board. This thing is a sure-footed goat on the hills but eats like a parakeet!

Our impression of the 700 Auto Diesel is a very good one. The brakes are excellent; we seldom used the foot brake, relying mainly on the hydraulic left handle-bar lever to stop. The indirect-injected engine starts easily in hot and cold weather and everything in between with its glow-plugs and heavy-duty battery.

The four-wheel independent suspension makes for smooth riding, but we noticed when you overload the 2-inch receiver hitch, there's quite a bit of "squat." Still, if you stay within Arctic Cat's recommendations, all is well. The machine will easily tow any reasonably loaded trailer.

Four-wheel-drive is available on-the-go at the flick of a switch on the right handle bar. If the going gets tough, a front differential lock hooks both front wheels together.

Pros and cons

Complaints? On our machine, the thumb-operated throttle had excessive travel. You have to move the lever almost half of its total travel before the engine tips in. You get used to it, but it's an irritation that needs to be adjusted or redesigned.

Because it's a diesel, the 700 uses a small, high-capacity battery to power the starter against the engine's high compression. Also, it has to light the glow plugs in cold weather.

The 700 Auto Diesel is a big machine, and at first it feels "heavy" to maneuver, particularly at very slow speeds. After some seat time, however, we became accustomed to the "feel" and found the machine to be a faithful companion, and one we would certainly consider if we were buying. The fuel economy and the once-a-year maintenance schedule are very attractive.

You can buy one for \$9,299 and it comes with front and back cargo racks, an owner's manual and small toolkit under the seat, and the ability deliver just about anything you decide to do.

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