



# BANG FOR BUCK

The SWM RS 500R is new to the Australian market, hitting the mark at less than \$9K. We hit the bush to see what it's like

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I felt like the guy at the pub who had ordered off the specials board — “what’s that?” was commonly asked of me when the bike was on my ute, as if I was parading around with a plate of goodness. It was an intrigued, interested and familiarised voice while looking at the red 500cc thumper. What you see here is essentially a 2010 Husqvarna TE510.

Speedy Working Motors (SWM) kicked into life in the early 1970s, building lightweight competitive enduro bikes for racing until 1984 when production was ceased. In 2014, Pierer Industry AG purchased Husqvarna

or, in other words, KTM. This left the Husqvarna factory in Lombardy, Italy, empty. Former Husqvarna engineer Ampelio Macchi purchased the Husqvarna designs and secured the old factory, thanks to investment from Chinese powerhouse the Shinerly Group. In turn, he took on many ex-staff and the old SWM brand.

The SWM RS 500R has been updated from the old Husky. You’ll find new plastics and seat, a Mikuni D42 throttle body and a GET ignition, which is produced by Athena. You’re treated to KYB forks, Brembo brakes, a hydraulic clutch, electric start and

oversized tapered handlebars. From standard, the RS 300R and RS 500R are both fitted with a single-sided Arrow exhaust, replacing the dual exhausts and saving 4.2kg. There is plenty to smile about when you look at the SWM RS 500R.

**IN THE TRAILS**

Let’s get this straight: significant leaps have been made in technology in seven years. Bikes have improved in that period of time; however, they are priced accordingly. This bike is not aimed at someone who is going to be racing professional enduro for the season; it’s

capable of some serious terrain, but is designed for the trailrider. The bike suits someone who heads into the bush on a regular basis, the odd trips to the ride park, even someone who dabbles in some grass track. Think Kawasaki KLX450R, think Suzuki DR-Z400E, this is the market the RS 500R fits into.

Throwing a leg over the bike, it doesn’t feel dated, even though it’s based off a bike we saw quite some time ago. The Domino grips are fairly nice, the ergonomics spacious. My only gripe is that the clutch lever feels a little square-edged. The the action of the clutch is quite nice, however.

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**SPECIFICATIONS**

- Engine: Liquid-cooled, DOHC 4-valve, single-cylinder, 4-stroke
- Capacity: 501cc
- Bore & Stroke: 97 x 67.8mm
- Transmission: 6-speed
- Clutch: Wet multi-plate with hydraulic control
- Ignition: GET
- Fuel System: Mikuni D42 EFI
- Start: Electric
- Front Suspension: 50mm USD Kayaba fork
- Rear Suspension: Kayaba shock
- Front Wheel: 21-inch with 260mm brake disc
- Rear Wheel: 18-inch with 240mm brake disc
- Seat Height: 963mm
- Wheel Base: 1495mm
- Ground Clearance: 250mm
- Fuel Capacity: 7.2L
- Weight: 107.4kg



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- AVAILABLE ACCESSORIES**
- Safari Oversized fuel tank — safaritanks.com.au
  - Bash plate — forceaccessories.com.au
  - Radiator guards — forceaccessories.com.au
  - Graphics kits — motokit.com.au

Wide, open spaces are where the RS 500R is most at home. The engine is strong and easy to ride with lots of torque. The engine has a slightly old-school nature to it, which we think is a good thing. It’s a broad, meaty power curve and it gets moving in wide, open spaces. When the going gets super tight and technical, the bike is a little harder to ride — you’ll still have lots of fun in single trail, just steer clear of

any Erzberg-like terrain! The KYB suspension handles general trailriding really well; the front-end is quite trustworthy and inspires confidence. I did send it off a couple of erosion mounds and it was a fairly heavy landing, a trade-off for it being nice and plush to ride. If you were a big bloke, or wanted to be jumping it often, some heavier springs could be in order.



# FEATURE

2017 SWM RS 500R BIKE TEST



## TRUE OR FALSE

- **It's a Chinese-built bike.**  
FALSE: The bike is made in Italy in the old Husqvarna factory.
- **It's made by Shinery.**  
FALSE: Chinese company Shinery funded the Italian-made project.
- **SWMs are based on old Husqvarnas.**  
TRUE: With changes and updates, the SWM range is based on the 2010 Husqvarna models.
- **There is no dealer support.**  
FALSE: Dealers are current in every state except for NT.
- **There are aftermarket accessories available.**  
TRUE: Safari tanks, Force Accessories and Moto Kit offers SWM-specific products for these models.

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## THE WASH UP

The SWM RS 500R is a good bike for the money. If you ride it in the conditions it's designed for, you'll be rewarded. It's a bike littered with quality parts and a good track record from the 2010 Husqvarna TE510. The Arrow exhaust is an added performance bonus and adds some extra value to boot — you can tell it has unearthed the power, but it's really loud. It would be great if it were a little less offensive; it's a bit too loud to be a trail bike, which you don't want to be attracting attention to. It's a catch 22, though, as it also saves weight and adds power. I also melted my boot on one of the bolts on the header on the left-hand side of the bike, the opposite of most models. The engine is nice and punchy; we had a few issues getting the idle right, so spend some time with that. The suspension is well settled and looks pretty cool, too. At \$8990 plus ORC, this bike is very good value and well worth the consideration if you are looking at a new trail bike, or even looking at a second-hand bike with a \$9k budget.

## SIMILAR OPTIONS — NEW

- 2017 SUZUKI DR-Z400 E — \$7990
- 2017 SWM RS300R — \$8290
- 2017 KAWASAKI KLX450R — \$11,199