

Chiappa 1911 Review

I recently had the opportunity to test two new 1911s from Italian firearm manufacturer Chiappa, both in .45ACP. These are full size with forged steel frame and slide, and I was interested to see how these performed “out of the box”.

The two models tested are the Field, and the Superior. Each came in lockable foam lined plastic case, with two eight round magazines with steel followers, and a cleaning kit. In addition, the Superior came with a bushing removal tool and a trigger lock.

Before shooting, I field-stripped both and was impressed by the fit and finish. Sharp lines, clean machining, well fitted wood grips with sharp diamond checkering. The blue finish is good without being highly polished. Disassembly was easy without the need for a bushing removal tool. The magazine bases can be removed for cleaning.

The Field model is original 1911A1 style, complete with steel arched mainspring housing, and small fixed sights. Trigger pull measured 2.7kg (6lb), with little creep.

The Superior has a lot of extra features including front and rear cocking serrations, fibre optic front and rear (Novak style) dovetailed sights, commander style hammer, ambidextrous safeties, extended beavertail grip safety with memory bump, adjustable long trigger. Trigger pull measured 2.2kg (5lb), crisp.

45s are always fun to shoot. Powerful enough, but not unpleasant. How did they shoot? Function and accuracy testing was carried out using Fiocchi 230fmj ammo, average 750 fps. From the first fully loaded eight round mag, both pistols fed and fired all rounds, and the slide locked back after the last shot every time. Group shooting was from 25 metres, standing, handheld only. With the Field groups were around 100mm (4”), not helped by the tiny sights. The Superior grouped 75mm (3”) assisted by the bigger sights, nice sight picture. I happened to have some reloads with me, Hornady 200XTP hollow-point over VN320 at 940fps. These shot into a nice 50mm (2”) group. Without any sight adjustments, groups were all centred in the A zone of a Standard IPSC target.

After extended shooting both pistols, the sharp grip checkering was causing discomfort- a light sanding would fix this. The sharp edge of the Field trigger was cutting when shooting one handed, not an issue when shooting two-handed. I found the standard length magazine release difficult to operate on both pistols without changing my grip. Otherwise, ergonomics are good. Safeties are smooth and easy to engage/ disengage. The match trigger on the Superior was perfect length for me. I did not adjust the over-travel screw, so there was a still a bit of over-travel noticeable.

Luckily for me, there were several Cowboy and IPSC shooters at Christchurch Pistol Club who were willing to assist in emptying magazines for research purposes. The Cowboys generally preferred the Field as it would be suitable for “Wild Bunch”. Some who found it difficult to shoot steel targets with the Field (tiny sights) fared much better with the Superior and its large square sights with fibre optics. The better trigger also helped.

Overall, I was impressed with both pistols. These are quality, all steel 1911s, accurate and reliable out of the box, good value at under \$1500. Cowboys and others looking for an original style 1911A1 should consider the Field, but for most the Superior is great value at only \$100 more than the Field. This pistol would be suitable for IPSC Classic with some minor tweaks: fit a magwell, and extended mag release. For me, I would also lighten the trigger a little.

Thanks to the fine folks at Gun City for providing the pistols and ammo for this review. The Superior is also available in 9mm.



