

Narva Ultima 225 HID Driving Lights

HID (high intensity discharge) driving lights set a new standard when they hit the market 10 years ago, but they were not cheap, at over two grand for a pair. Since then, competition has increased and pricing is around half that level, even for top-shelf stuff.



After examining the available HID lights we were impressed by Narva's Ultima 225 HIDs, so we sought a long-term test pair, to see if their durability matched that of the IPF 900 HIDs that have given such excellent service.

As the model number suggests, the Ultimas measure 225mm in diameter and are 140mm deep.

They have synthetic body material, with clear, polycarbonate lenses that have a glare-reducing plastic insert in the top of the lens.

This is coloured a distinctive red on the HID version, but the kit includes a black replacement for those who want to remain understated.

Clear polycarbonate covers are standard equipment.

Narva's Jake Smith suggested we evaluate a pair of spread beams, rather than the normal pairing of a spot with a spread. His theory is that the HID spread beams have a range of more than 600 metres, which is what we're happy with from halogen pencil beams. Bush drivers can set up the HID spread beams so that they illuminate a wide section of road and, just as importantly in 'roo country, the sides of the road.

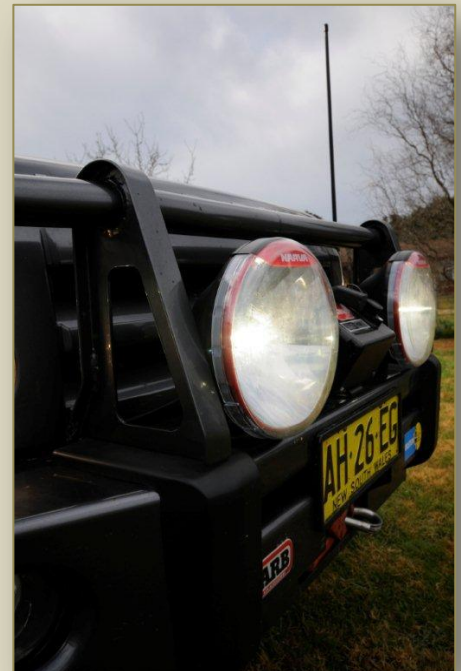
The kits came with a complete 'plug and play' wiring loom that included a mouse switch, fuse and fuse holder, relay and relay block, and cables insulated with corrugated tubing.

A one-metre wiring harness with water-tight, click-connectors joined the remote ballasts to the lights and ballast mounting brackets were included.

A bonus inclusion was a patented switching box that allowed the loom to work with positive or negative triggering.

The mountings were Narva's rotary cup types, with stainless steel securing bolts and Nylok nuts.

Pricing varies in the \$1000-1200 band, depending on where you shop.



On and Off Road

The wiring kit and instructions made fitting relatively easy, because our Discovery 3 was already fitted with HID lighting that made duplication simple. However, buyers who feel out of their depth with what are quite complex electricals should have an auto electrician do the work.

The lights bolted on easily, but even when tightened in place, could still be moved slightly. We wondered how long the lights would stay aimed and whether they'd shake around on rough roads. We needn't have worried: they stayed aimed through two rough-track bush trips and the beams didn't vibrate at all. In fact, the ease of moving the lights even when they were tight made it simple to vary beam concentration – closely aligned beam centres for long-distance vision and spread beam centres for better side vision in 'roo country.

We discovered on a night drive into Cunnamulla, on a dirt road that was thick with 'roos that we could spread the beams quite widely and see 'roos that were several metres away from the road edge. More significantly, the 'roos could see the bush that was further away from the road than where they were standing, so when they panicked at the noise of the approaching vehicle they didn't jump into the only patch of light they could see: the road in front of the vehicle. Instead, they chose to hop into the bush that was lit by the very wide beam spread.

Our post-bush-trip inspection of the Narvas showed that they sustained no damage, other than a couple of small chips in the polycarbonate lens protectors.

Upgraded Ultimas

In June 2010 Narva announced upgraded Ultima 225s, including changes to the HID versions. The lamps' extra tough glass reinforced polymer housings now have interior space for the ballasts to be accommodated internally. This provides additional protection against the elements and saves additional mounting.

The mounting system has been changed, although our testing showed no problems with the previous arrangement on an ARB bar.



Bolt holes on the bracket have been repositioned, so they can be reversed, allowing improved forward and aft movement to suit a variety of applications on 4x4s, trucks, coaches and off-road vehicles. An 8mm interlocking spacer block has been added to provide improved height adjustment and an aluminium 'crush tube' has been inserted into the housing, to give extra strength and stability. Snap-fit bracket caps have been fitted, for increased security against theft.