

FIRST
RIDE



MERIDA SCULTURA DISC 6000

£2400 > A smooth, solid and stable ride

Creating a disc version of a rim-braked model isn't simply a case of shifting brake mounts, as the brake forces involved necessitate

re-engineering much of the frame and fork to counteract them without ruining the ride. As one of the world's biggest bike manufacturers, Merida doesn't do things by halves, but economies of scale do mean that it can offer excellent quality for a reasonable price.

Following 2015's launch of the latest Scultura World Tour race bike, 2016 saw the debut of the Scultura Disc. This 6000 model sits third in line to the throne of the

Team version, whose competitive geometry has a 20mm shorter head-tube in our 56cm size. But the Disc 6000 costs over £4000 less.

First impressions of that 190mm head-tube, and limited saddle to bar drop in our preferred frame size were a concern, as there was no choice but to run the bar around 25mm higher than usual, but the details impressed. It might stand tall, but both the down- and seat-tubes are formed with truncated aerofoils, while the bridgeless →

SPECIFICATION

Weight 8.46kg (56cm)

Frame Scultura Disc CF2

Fork Full carbon, 12mm thru-axle

Groupset Shimano RS685 hydraulic levers, Ultegra, 50/34, 11-28

Brakes Shimano RS805 callipers, 160mm rotors

Wheels Fulcrum Racing Expert DB

Finishing kit FSA Gossamer alloy bar, Merida Expert stem and carbon seatpost, Prologo Kappa 3 saddle, 25mm Continental Grand Sport Race tyres

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Whatever the road condition, the Scultura offers up a smooth ride

HIGHS
Ride quality, performance, specification, price

LOWS
Too tall for the racers

BUY IF
You want a well-priced, refined, all-day bike that's faster than you'd expect

seatstays morph from round at the dropouts through flattened, and top out with small Kamm Tail (shortened tail) profiles sweeping bow-like in to the flattened top-tube. The BB86 bottom bracket area is sizeable, and sprouts a pair of purposefully deep and boxy asymmetric chainstays.

Despite its sub-1000g frame, the complete bike's 8.46kg weight isn't exceptionally light, but from the saddle it feels well balanced and lively, and soon banished any performance preconceptions. The Merida's Fulcrum wheelset has great pickup, swift acceleration and enough rigidity to enhance the bike's handling. The rims measure 23mm externally, are 28mm deep with opposing asymmetric profiles front and rear, and have just 21 spokes each. Grippy 25mm Continental Grand Sport Race tyres plump up to 26mm, and there's clearance for 28mm tyres.

Merida is the first company to include the Focus-designed RAT (Rapid Axle Technology) 12mm

thru-axle system, although it's so quick to use we're surprised it's taken so long. Wheel removal is just a lever flick and a quarter turn of the axle before withdrawing it, no tools needed. This solid connection between the wheels and frameset results in crisp and precise steering. High-speed flicks, sudden direction changes under braking and rough surface stability are all similarly undramatic, and that added air volume is a huge help.

The ride is incredibly smooth even on the roughest tarmac, and despite the tall position, the Scultura Disc is extremely quick, accelerating like a whippet and climbing very well too, thanks to impressive frame and wheelset stiffness. On constantly rolling, testing terrain it was easy to carry

THE VERDICT

The Scultura Disc 6000 is a stunning endurance bike, with poise, speed and comfort in abundance



+ **Below** CNC-milled fins provide additional cooling on long descents
Bottom Despite our initial concerns over the Merida's shorter head-tube we were still impressed by the details



speed through downhill bends and power over the rises.

An Ultegra compact drivetrain brings sensibly-gear refinement, with Ultegra-equivalent flat-mount hydraulic disc brakes and 160mm Ice Tech rotors that provide powerful and progressive stopping. Merida's added its own disc cooler beneath the rear calliper, as it believes its position reduces the amount of cooling airflow it receives. A neat forged aluminium component with CNC-milled fins that rest on the outside of the chainstay, it's claimed to make a big difference during long descents.

Our cockpit's FSA bar differs from the Merida alloy bar listed as standard, but the other own-branded finishing kit was faultless, and the Prologo Kappa 3 saddle isn't only colour matched, but has a level of support and cushioning that suits the rider in a hurry and those riding a century. By the end of one 80-mile ride, we wouldn't have swapped it for any of our other bikes, and we felt fresh enough to do it again.