

MERIDA ONE-SIXTY 8000

£5,500 Excellent frame shines despite skinny rims and wonky bar



Merida have been quietly edging closer and closer to the top of the long-travel rankings in recent years, and the latest One-Sixty puts them into a potential podium position. Even before you get onto the 8000 you can see it's shaped 'right'. The large size combines a 475mm reach with a 65.5-degree head angle to create a super-stable, self-correcting handling feel that's on your side even when the terrain definitely isn't.

RockShox's Lyrik is an unshakably solid, smooth and consistently-controlled fork that's easily tuned to a sweet spot. There's no shortage of stiffness from the big box-section front end of the carbon frame too, making the only handling glitch the odd-shaped 760mm bar. That's an easy swap though, and the SRAM X01 Eagle and Guide RS stop/go kit is excellent.

Clamped internal cable routing and room for a bottle are design pluses, while the press-fit BB

and just three frame size options are minuses. The asymmetric alloy rear end has extended chainstays tips which, together with the short rocker link, create a 'floating' mount for the

latest RockShox Super Deluxe RC3 shock. This has a three-position low-speed compression damping lever, which adds pedalling support to the smoothly mobile, high-traction back end if revs are low and torque high.

The One-Sixty is clearly a gravity-orientated rig though, and while it has 160mm of travel, its capacity to calmly swallow the biggest blocks and drops of battering black runs or off-piste boulder fields without flinching, spiking or getting kicked off line means it feels like a much bigger bike. This means you can push the Merida hard on the rowdiest trails with masses more confidence than on most bikes – even the elite

SPEC

Frame 'CFA' carbon fibre w/ aluminium swingarm, 160mm travel

Fork RockShox Lyrik RCT3 Boost, 170mm travel

Shock RockShox Super Deluxe RC3

Drivetrain SRAM

X01 Eagle w/ Descendant cranks & MRP TR guide (1x12)

Wheelset DT Swiss EX 1501

Brakes SRAM Guide RS

Post RockShox Reverb Stealth, 150mm

Weight 13.8kg (30.42lb), large

line-up assembled here. Like the Lyrik, the Super Deluxe shock has a more forgiving bandwidth, in terms of tuning, than the Fox Float

X dampers on the other bikes, so you can get your A game on ASAP.

It would have been a possible test winner if Merida had fitted a wider option from the excellent DT Swiss 1501 wheel line-up. Unfortunately, the 25mm rims together with the stiff '2.4in' carcass of the Continental Baron mud tyres (which actually only measures 2.2in) create an unnecessarily harsh ride. That meant the One-Sixty only revealed its truly outstanding performance when we swapped in wider, smoother wheels and tyres, but it's potential is still good enough to score very high.

www.merida-bikes.com

MBUK VERDICT

Outstanding shape, handling balance and suspension shine despite some niggles

