



MERIDA SILEX 9000

£3500 > Merida's drop-bar 29er multi-surface special

Merida's approach to the adventure/gravel genre stands out among the competition. The

geometry steps away from the road-derived shapes we've become used to, opting for something more progressive. A short 80mm stem, a slack 71-degree head and steep 74-degree seat angles are shapes from the world of mountain bikes where the trend has been towards combining slacker head angles, longer frames and shorter stems. The frame is designed to take up to 42mm tyres on 700c wheels or 2.2in tyres when combined with smaller 650b hoops. The 9000 ships with Fulcrum's excellent Red Passion 3 wheels, part of the brand's 29er cross-country wheel range.

The Silex has proven to be a capable all-rounder. It feels different to an average road bike, its relaxed head angle making the front-end

track brilliantly on seriously rough surfaces. Barrelling along boulder-strewn byways the front finds its path well and doesn't get smacked offline. Reducing the stem length also balances out the handling; it combines the stability afforded by the slack fork with a much nimbler response than you'd expect.

The 35mm Maxxis Razzo tyres use a semi-slick tread pattern, with most of the tread surface taken up with a diamond pattern, and flanked on its haunches by deeper-toothed tread to add a bit of off-road cornering bite. On the road, they work well, and on dry dirt and gravel, they impress. As soon as the dirt gets damp, they have a tendency to fill up quickly, which makes for interesting handling. With both the front and back end breaking traction early, you have to keep your wits about you if the weather turns.

We'd have liked Merida to have opted for bigger tyres. The bike feels so good on the bumpy stuff we'd

like the opportunity to exploit that beyond the current tyres' limitations.

Ride quality is exceptional, with a supple noise-dampening chassis and a seatpost with plenty of flex. The frame weighs a respectable 1050g plus 500g for the fork, so it's one of the lighter all-roader framesets around.

SRAM's Force 1 is its reliable self with the 44/10-42 1x gearing ample for pretty much anything bar bombing down long road descents. The Force 1 callipers working on 160mm rotors are superb, providing power and control in equal measure.

If Merida had beefier tyres as an option, we'd say it's nigh-on the perfect pedaller if you're looking to broaden your horizons.

SPECIFICATION

Weight 8.15kg (XL)
Frame Carbon
Fork Carbon
Gears SRAM Force 1 44, 10-42
Brakes SRAM Force hydraulic disc
Wheels Fulcrum Red Passion 3
Finishing kit Merida Expert stem and alu compact drop bar, Merida Carbon Team S-Flex seatpost, Prologo Scratch 2 saddle, 35mm Maxxis Razzo semi-slick tyres

THE VERDICT

Sweet handling, smooth and stable ride for the rough stuff

★★★★★



HIGHS

Clever geometry gives commanding ride position, stability and control

LOWS

Tyres offer limited grip in adverse weather

BUY IF

You want an adventurous all-roader that's not compromised by excess weight or on its road manners

↑ The SRAM Force gearing proved to be its usual reliable self throughout testing

→ A handy reminder not to get carried away with the torque

↓ Forged alloy disc-cooling fins reduce brake heat

