


ROAD
TEST



 **Below** Carbon fork aids comfort when the roads get rougher
Bottom Thru-axles make wheel removal easier over quick-release items



Its lengthy down-tube is in stark contrast to the surprisingly short stem

MERIDA SILEX 700

£2100 > Hi Ho Silex

Merida's gravel bike has a bold look, our large sized bike has a main triangle whose perimeter is nearer to being a square, and its lengthy down-tube is in stark contrast to the surprisingly short stem.

The 220mm head-tube on our aluminium test bike makes the front end quite upright, and it's backed up by a steeply sloping top-tube and heavily hydroformed down-tube that's joined with a flared buttress covering more than half its length. The top-tube has a round-edged diamond profile, while the seat- and chainstays are hourglass-shaped.

The partly flattened seatstays cross over the seat-tube to tuck in under the top-tube, creating a strong junction, with the dropped stay design and carbon seatpost adding seated comfort.

There's a third bottle mount beneath the down-tube, auxilliary luggage/cage mounts on each fork leg for longer trips, and mudguard fittings for practicality. Merida supplies the bar, stem and seatpost, but leaves the wheels and saddle to the Italians. From the off, the Fulcrum Racing Expert DB wheelset feels taut and quick, and Prologo's Scratch saddle is well-shaped, supportive and comfortable.

SPECIFICATION

Weight 9.59kg (L/53cm)
Frame Silex Lite aluminium
Fork Carbon
Gears Shimano Ultegra 50/34, 11-34
Brakes Shimano RS505 hydraulic disc
Wheels Fulcrum Racing 700 DB CX
Finishing kit Merida Expert aluminium bar and stem, carbon seatpost, Prologo Scratch saddle, 35mm Maxxis Razzo tyres

Our usual standard road bike size is 56cm, with a similar length top-tube, which brought us to this large frame size and a handlebar height around 50mm higher than we'd prefer. As well as the front end's height, there's a slack 71-degree head angle and short 80mm stem to consider. But, the Silex has an effective top-tube length of almost 60cm, so reach is reasonable. Add in a steep 74-degree seat angle, and zero setback seatpost, and your positional parameters need tweaking.

Naturally gravitating towards riding in the compact drops much of the time, we were still pondering the geometry as we started a heavily

The Silex 700 is very capable on- and off-road and well specced for the money



potholed dirt track. The Maxxis Razzo 35mm semi-slick tyres are totally smooth in the middle, with fine file tread bands on each side and some raised tread blocks on the shoulders. At 50psi, they perform like a quick road tyre on tarmac. We didn't consider their lack of straight line grip until we'd spent time on the dirt, but we didn't have any problems unless the surface was really loose.

With relatively high tyre pressures and fairly low air volume, the Merida's ride comfort was impressive, absorbing general chatter and sucking up bigger hits. The bike's willingness to accelerate helps enormously over changeable surfaces, where pace naturally fluctuates, and makes avoiding obstructions less tiring. The wide gearing range was welcome, even though the Silex's lower mass and lively wheelset meant we didn't trouble the 34x34 lowest gear.

HIGHS
All-Ultegra groupset, Fulcrum wheels, frame quality

LOWS
Higher riding position than usual for its size

BUY IF
You prioritise a slightly higher position to better enjoy your adventures

Its 50x11 top end came in handy when descending too.

Shimano's hydraulic discs were very welcome too, and even though our pre-production model has the 105-level RS505 lever and calliper pairing, rather than the intended Ultegra items, power and control were never in question.

We didn't feel cramped on the Silex, despite it being a little shorter than usual, and judicious use of the drops will hustle it along at an impressive lick. Its road manners are fine, with no shortage of speed from the wheels and tyres, which carry it over unpaved roads with composure.

THE VERDICT

The Silex forges a bold path with its looks and position, but is great value and rides well

★★★★★

Also consider



FOR A LITTLE MORE
MERIDA SILEX 6000 £2250

The lowest priced carbon Silex shares its frameset with the range-topping Silex 9000, and has a SRAM Apex 1 groupset and Merida's Expert CC wheels.



FOR A LITTLE LESS
MERIDA SILEX 600 £1700

The Silex Lite aluminium frame and carbon fork come with SRAM's Apex 1 single ring groupset and Fulcrum's Racing 700 wheelset.