



MERIDA ONE-TWENTY 400

£1,500

SPECIFICATION

Frame Lite aluminium, 120mm travel
Shock SR Suntour UNAir LO-R
Fork SR Suntour XCR 34 LO-R, 130mm travel
Wheels JD Boost hubs, Merida Comp CC 20mm rims, Maxxis Forekaster 29x2.35in tyres
Drivetrain FSA Gamma Pro, 32t chainset, Shimano SLX Shadow Plus r-mech and 1x11 shifter
Brakes Shimano MT200, 180mm
Components Merida Expert CC 740mm bar, Comp CC 60mm stem, Comp CC post, Comp CC saddle
Sizes S, M, L, XL
Weight 14.94kg (32.94lb)
Contact merida-bicycles.com

GEOMETRY

Size tested L
Head angle 66.4°
Seat angle 65.7°
BB height 336mm
Chainstay 430mm
Front centre 755mm
Wheelbase 1,185mm
Down tube 715mm
Top tube 610mm
Reach 455mm

The Merida is the only big-wheeler in this test, but the One-Twenty range is not exclusively made up of 29ers; using wheel-size specific frames, Merida gives riders options. On the two smallest sizes you can choose between more agile 27.5in, or fast-rolling 29in wheels, while the size L and XL are fitted exclusively with 29in hoops.

Launched earlier this season, the new Merida One-Twenty has been repositioned as a short-travel trail bike, and less of an XC/Marathon endurance machine. And this is reflected in the geometry, as its 66.4° head angle is slacker than a lot of longer travel bikes. It's also the only bike in this test to come with the wider 148mm Boost rear end, which makes it much easier to upgrade or replace the wheels.

For a new platform however, the frame still feels a tad short and tall, where the elevated top tube reduces standover clearance on the size L. This overall sensation of being slightly perched on the bike, rather than sat in it, is compounded by the lack of saddle height adjustment. Limited by a kinked seat tube design, and the location of the rocker link pivot, this bike is crying out for a dropper post. And given that the Merida is the most expensive bike on test, it really should come fitted with one as standard.

SUSPENSION

Given its model name, you'd assume the One-Twenty has 120mm of rear wheel vertical travel, but Merida's floating shock linkage actually delivers 129mm by our reckoning. That extra travel

out back also means that frame travel matches fork travel to within 1mm, where Merida has opted for the beefier Suntour XCR 34, which is exactly what you need on a 29er. That's because the bigger wheel has more leverage on the fork, so it's critical that the proportions of the fork are scaled up to match the wheel size. On the trail, the extra steering precision of the XCR 34 is appreciable, and it really gives you the confidence to charge hard. Unfortunately, it's not the most sensitive fork here and it has an annoying rattle that's present on every single bump.

COMPONENTS

Sporting a wide-range 11-46t cassette, combined with a 32t chainring, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Merida has a bigger gear range than the Bossnut. Once you factor in the increased gearing effect of the bigger 29in wheels however, both bikes are evenly matched, the Merida gaining a slight advantage on climbs and inching ahead on the descents.

Shifting is flawless with the 1x Shimano SLX kit, and the clutch-style Shadow Plus rear derailleur and ample frame protection on both the chain and seatstays ensure a silent ride. Which is probably why we noticed the fork rattle so much. It also allowed us to focus on the profile of the handlebar, which has too much back sweep and is a touch too narrow.

PERFORMANCE

From the get-go the Merida One-Twenty felt solid and direct. You can tuck in behind the burly XCR 34 fork, release

your grip on the Shimano brakes and really let the big 29in wheels steamroll over everything. It pedals with ruthless efficiency too, so it accelerates easily even with the additional weight of the bigger 29in wheels. So in every respect, the Merida is a fast bike.

The Maxxis Forekaster tyres don't do Merida any favours, though, as you can hear the side knobs pinging of roots and rocks even when conditions are bone dry.

So the Merida could be even faster with better tyres, but the congested suspension is also holding it back. Granted, it's nothing like as bunged up as the Jamis, but both ends of the Merida lack the pitter-patter response found on the Giant and Calibre.

VERDICT

We were seriously impressed by the overall pace of the entry-level Merida One-Twenty 400, and with a couple of simple changes to the specification it could be a total trail blazer. The rapid initial gains would come from better tyres to keep the One-Twenty on the fastest lines going downhill.

And given the restricted range of saddle height adjustment, the One Twenty is simply crying out for a dropper post, which ups the initial outlay even further. Leaving us no choice but to mark the Merida down a point in the ratings on value alone.





HIGHS
Solid and fast

LOWS
Needs a dropper post and better tyres



Merida linkage sandwiches the shock at both ends



Burly Suntour XCR 34 tracks true but doesn't flinch on small hits



11-46t cassette and 32t chainring offers a wide gear range