



SENSA FERMO £1,100

THE BIKE

Here's a cyclo-cross offering from a reasonably small manufacturer, imported by Merlin Cycles to the UK. Sensa wasn't a brand I'd heard of before, but this is a really nice-looking bike, with clean lines through the frameset. The other thing I noticed immediately was its Shimano Ultegra groupset. That's a notch above its competitors on this test, and a significant jump from the Tiagra featured on a few of the other bikes – even a rung higher than the 105 kit featured on the Scott.

The wheels are generic, box-section rims, quite similar to most of the others on test, and designed for longevity in the face of off-road and all-weather abuse.

THE RIDE

Because this was a new brand to me, it's fair to say my expectations were low. But I was greatly impressed by the Sensa, not just aesthetically but in terms of its performance across a range of surfaces. The Ultegra groupset really gives it the edge, and the shifting just feels sharper and more precise than the others on test. Higher-end components like this should also prolong the shelf life of the bike, and leave you to get on with enjoying the ride rather than worrying about whether you can shift cleanly to get up that slippery-looking hill.

The ride in general offered Cannondale or Scott levels of stiffness, allied to a modicum of comfort – a very pleasant surprise. It's a shame, then, that this bike was let down slightly by its braking performance – it was noticeably slow in bringing me to a stop both on- and off-road. You'd expect the performance of a £1,000-plus bike to match the standard of its componentry.

As with most others in this test, the wheels did the job – they were neither outstanding nor bad, just strong, and I'm sure they'd prove reliable in the face of whatever you could throw at them.

For the money, this bike's a very good proposition, and turned out to be the big surprise of this test. But despite its higher-spec groupset it was outperformed overall by the Cannondale and Scott bikes.

IN SUMMARY

The Sensa is a fine-looking bike, with clean lines through the frameset. The Ultegra groupset felt noticeably better than the others, and the ride quality was very good. Sadly, some of this good work was let down by below-par braking, but it's still a high value proposition.

Verdict Great spec and a good ride
More Info merlincycles.com

8.5/10

IN DETAIL

1. These Ultegra shifters set a new quality benchmark in this test
2. Schwalbe Rocket Ron tyres are a good mid- to high-range offering

