



Cycle's test promise

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better as I asked for the standard 11-32 cassette to be swapped for an 11-34. The Light Blue has an 11-28, which would make me swear towards the end of a hilly century ride.

Seatposts are seldom a key factor in bike tests but I disliked the Ribble's. The single-bolt saddle clamp needed a tremendous amount of torque to stop the nose kicking up towards the sky if I went over a bump. A fore-and-aft two-bolt clamp would be better, both for setting the saddle angle and keeping it in place. Swapping the post is complicated by the fact that the Ribble's is a D-shaped truncated aerofoil.

The Light Blue has a Driser 4-10 handlebar, so called for the 4° flare on the drops and the 10mm rise from the stem clamp. It looks odd but does gain you a little front-end height, which I appreciated. I was less keen on the bike's mudguards. The front is too short and the stay bolts on both bulge prominently toward the tyres, compromising clearance.

The ride

Much is made of feel of different materials – the vibration damping effect of carbon, the springy resilience of steel and so on. The Ribble's monolithic carbon frame is surely stiffer at the bottom bracket, while the skinnier stays of the Light Blue should be slightly more forgiving on long rides. But I can't say I noticed significant real-world differences. Both bikes were stiff enough through the cranks for my modest power. Both were sufficiently comfortable, having similar tyres, similar geometries (M Light Blue vs L Ribble) and, after my tweaks, essentially the same riding position.



Other options



SPA CYCLES TITANIUM AUDAX 105 R7000 £1,495

Carbon-forked titanium audax bike with 72°/72.5° head/seat angles, equipped with 11-speed 105. Will fit 28mm tyres and mudguards under its brake callipers. Currently on offer.

spacycles.co.uk



TREK DOMANE AL 5 GEN 4 £2,150

Gravel-influenced aluminium road bike with a carbon fork, 12-speed 105, hydraulic discs and clearance for 38mm tyres and mudguards.

trekbikes.com

Aside from the brakes, the biggest difference in how the bikes rode was their aerodynamics. The Ribble was faster downhill and into the wind. Those truncated aerofoils doubtless helped but I think it was mostly due to the different handlebars. The Light Blue has a 42cm bar; the Ribble has a 38cm bar that I selected from the customisation options. A 38cm bar fits me better and tucks my shoulders in, improving the aerodynamics of what is by far the least aero thing on the bike: me.

I'd have preferred slightly slacker frame angles for both bikes. Shifting weight from your hands to your sit bones (slacker seat angle) eases the upper-body strain of long rides, while a bike that holds a straight line more easily (slacker head angle, more trail) is nice to have when you're tired. I'd also have liked wider tyres (28mm or 32mm), for a plusher ride and better traction on descents and wet roads. ●

Verdict

As a full carbon bike with 105 and hydraulic brakes, the Ribble Endurance SL Disc is good value. Its standout features are the groupset and the customisation options. Heavier riders with a punchier pedalling style may appreciate its stiff (and aero) carbon frame but I'd rather have bigger clearances and less racy angles – even if that meant a 'downgrade' to aluminium.

The Light Blue Wolfson 105 has a well-designed Reynolds 853/725 frame. I like how it looks and how it rides, and would consider buying it as a frameset. As a complete bike, I'd hesitate. The brakes are fine but I had an obvious issue with the wheels, and would also change the cassette, stem, handlebar, mudguards and maybe the fork – all of which would ramp up the cost.