

CANNONDALE SUPER SIX HI MOD RED

Cycling journalist Mat Brett tests a high-end carbon road bike



Cannondale's Super Six road bike has won lots of awards and even has a Grand Tour title to its name, with Ivan Basso riding one to victory in last year's Giro d'Italia. It has plenty to offer non-professional riders too.

This is the least expensive of the Super Sixes in high-modulus carbon fibre, although standard-modulus versions are available with frames 150g heavier. The cheapest, with Shimano's 105 components, costs £1799.99.

The Super Six is designed

for speed, but whereas many high-performance bikes will shake your fillings loose and leave you feeling battered, this is a remarkably smooth ride. Cannondale ascribe this to the skinny, snaking SAVE ('Synapse Active Vibration Elimination') seatstays. I'm not sure the shape makes much difference but the Super Six is certainly buzz-free and comfortable enough to ride on an all-day sportive.

The one proviso is that you need to be happy with a racy geometry because the ride position is low and fairly stretched. The head tube on

our 56cm model is 15.5cm tall. Even with 3cm of spacers and a low-drop handlebar, that demands a certain amount of flexibility. If you want a more upright, relaxed position, Cannondale's Synapse bikes have head tubes 2-2.5cm higher.

The SRAM Red compact chainset (50/34-tooth chainrings) is a welcome feature for long days in the saddle (a 53/39T option is available). Matched to a 12-26 cassette, it gives you – in road bike terms – some lower gear ratios to keep you spinning up the climbs.

The Super Six's low weight is a bonus on the hills; the longer and steeper the climb, the more you'll appreciate it. Plus, with a huge diameter down tube, tapered head tube (1 1/8in to 1 1/2in), and oversized BB30 bottom bracket, there's virtually no flex even when you get out of the saddle. That's the biggest benefit over, say, a £1,500 bike. The extra cash gets you high-grade carbon that results in a bike that climbs and accelerates very well.

Negatives? Well, multi-purpose the Super Six ain't. It's designed to be lightweight, stiff and quick – and that's what it is. If you're after a quality sports bike with a dash of comfort thrown into the mix, and you can afford the premium price, take a good look.

NEED TO KNOW

Price: £3,499.99

Contact: 01202 732288, Cyclingsportsgroup.co.uk

Sizes available: 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 63cm

Weight: 6.76kg/14.87lb (56cm, without pedals)

Frame & fork: Full high-modulus carbon fibre frame with BB30 bottom bracket, full high-modulus carbon fibre fork w' tapered steerer

Gearing: 20-speed, 34-110in, 172.5mm SRAM Red chainset, 34/50T, chainrings, 12-26 cassette, SRAM Red mechs and shifters

Braking: Tektro CX

Wheels: Mavic Ksyrium Elite 700C with Schwalbe Ultramo ZX 700x23C tyres

Pros: Lightweight frame and fork with top-end components; smooth ride

Con: Fast sports rides only

LOWER BUDGET



Genesis Equilibrium 10
£999.99

Reynolds 725 frame, Tiagra spec'd, the Equilibrium is comfortable and versatile. genesisbikes.co.uk



Specialized Roubaix Elite SL2 £1,649.99

With an upright ride position, this is among the most comfortable of road bikes. specialized.com



Giant Defy Advanced 1
£2,250

A tall front end gives this carbon option a fairly relaxed ride position. giant-bicycles.com