



Despite a weight over 10kg, and big tyres adding inertia, the Merida muscles up to speed well. Contrary to my experience of previous Maxxis road tyres, the big Detonator tyres roll easily. Just be sure to lower pressures to compensate for the volume or they'll feel like concrete.

Clever sculpting of the hydroformed tubes, including the shallow-but-broad top tube and very slim stays, means less vibration through the frame. This is amplified by the compact frame layout, which provides lots of seatpost extension.

The CUES combined brake and shifter levers are lumpy where they meet the bar but not to the palm-bruising extent of previous, affordable Shimano designs. A 50–34 chainset and 11–39 cassette keep cadence reasonable, whether descending at warp speed or winching up a wall. There is noticeably more lever throw for each shift compared to more expensive groupsets, and the KMC chain means shifts are fractionally slower. Hydraulic braking is firm and well communicated, with the wider footprint of the big tyres enabling you to brake harder on rougher surfaces without skidding.

Top: Discreet mudguard mounts make it suitable for year-round use, not just sunny days
Above: These 32mm tyres improve comfort and traction but still roll well

Other options



SPECIALIZED ALLEZ SHIMANO CUES £1,249

The Allez has always been a benchmark of alloy ride quality. This model matches the Merida for componentry, tyre clearance and frame fixtures for a significantly lower price.

specialized.com



TREK DOMANE AL4 £1,400

Trek's Domane AL4 combines more traditional frame proportions with a flared bar, a Shimano Tiagra 10-speed groupset, 32mm tyres, and rack, guard and top-tube bag mounts. trekbikes.com

Verdict

Merida's Scultura Endurance 300 is a lot more lively and sporting than you might expect for a relatively upright, wider-tyred bike. It holds speed well, doesn't drag obviously on climbs or descents and has enjoyable precision. As long as you use appropriate tyre pressures (I settled on around 50psi) this doesn't come at the expense of comfort. Mudguard mounts, a broad gear range and good tyre grip make it suited to longer rides in any weather.

For DIY bike maintainers, the positives on the road will be weighed against headset cable routing and PressFit bottom bracket concerns. Pricing is also slightly steeper than competitors from other mainstream, shop-sold brands.

Tech spec

Merida Scultura Endurance 300

Price: £1,500.

Sizes: S, M (tested), L, XL.

Weight: 10.37kg (22.86lb), without pedals.

Frame & fork: 6066 triple-butted and hydroformed aluminium frame with twin bottle cage mounts, three-point mudguard/rack mount and PressFit bottom bracket. Merida full-carbon fork with 'hidden' mudguard mounts.

Wheels: 32–622 Maxxis Detonator tyres, Merida Comp SL 622×23mm rims, 28 spokes, Merida Expert (Novatec) hubs.

Transmission: no pedals, Shimano CUES 170mm chainset with 50–34t chainrings, Shimano BB71 PressFit bottom bracket, KMC X10 chain, Shimano LG300 11–39 10-speed cassette. Shimano CUES 6030 shifters, 6020 GS rear and 6030 front derailleurs. 20 ratios, 24–123in.

Braking: Shimano CUES 6030 levers and callipers with RT10 160mm rotors.

Steering & seating: Merida Expert bar tape, Merida Expert SL II 400mm handlebar, Merida Team CC III 100mm stem, Acros ICR headset. Merida Comp SL saddle, Merida Comp CC 27.2mm seatpost.

Equipment: 4/6mm Allen key tool in rear-axle handle.

merida-bikes.com

Dimensions in millimetres and degrees

