



# Merida Road Race 903-18

Simon Smythe

**M**ERIDA has been better known for its mountain bikes in recent years, and the Taiwanese company currently sponsors a World Cup team. Now it has turned its attentions to the road and produces a good-looking range of skinny-tyred machines.

Aimed at first-time roadies, the Road Race 903-18 is made from 6061 butted aluminium with smooth welds. Geometry is racing rather than more relaxed sportive, and the head tube is shorter than on many entry-level bikes; it's also oval-profiled for extra stiffness.

Merida says the frame is more than worthy of upgrading. However, specced from head to toe with Shimano Tiagra, unless you become weight obsessed very early on in your cycling career or you simply can't make do with 'only' nine sprockets, there really

is no need to replace the excellent groupset here.

The frame's graphics are possibly a little unsubtle — novices may want to keep their heads down in a sportive or two before thinking of themselves as 'road racers', but with Road Race emblazoned across the top tube there's no hiding on this bike.

However, it's all smartly colour coordinated, down to the Vittoria Rubino 23C tyres. The carbon fork has the same red detailing, and the white bar tape and saddle give the bike a genuine pro look. The white forward-facing seatpost clamp is also a nice touch.

The wheels are Shimano WH500, decent wheels on a bike of this level — obviously not the lightest, but there are cheaper and heavier wheels around and it's nice that a corner hasn't been cut here.

Bar, stem, seatpost and saddle are Merida's own-brand X-Mission Comp and are all up to speed with the rest of the equipment.

Compared with more expensive

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race bikes, at 20.2lb (without pedals) it is a little heavier, but you wouldn't know it when you're riding it. The Merida feels lively, solid and steers well. With lighter wheels and a few key upgrades it will be possible to bring the weight down below 20lb.

It's one of the best, if not *the* best that we've ridden at this price point and it is a perfect first road bike.

## MERIDA ROAD RACE 903-18

Distributor	Merida <a href="http://www.merida-bikes.co.uk">www.merida-bikes.co.uk</a>
Price	£868.47
Weight	20.2lb (without pedals)
Frame	6,061 butted aluminium
Fork	Carbon/alloy steerer
Size range	XS, S, M, L, XL
Groupset	Shimano Tiagra
Size tested	M

OUR FIRST IMPRESSION

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