



The new DT Swiss wheels give the Strada impressive responsiveness at every speed

KTM STRADA 5000 DI2

£3149.99 ▶ Does KTM's e-shifter prove its performance appeal?

While KTM bicycles are no longer anything to do with KTM motorbikes, the standout signature orange lower handlebar tape, plus frame and wheel details certainly give this Austrian thoroughbred an iconic look.

Just as we've seen time and time again from bikes designed within the German test sphere of influence, priority is given to high levels of powertrain stiffness. In structural terms that means a big down-tube and deep chainstays either side of the supersized press-fit bottom bracket. In ride terms it means that whatever pressure you put through the sole of your shoe results in an encouragingly positive reaction from the rear wheel, accompanied by a noticeable pick-up in pace.

Along with the top half of the frame, there's more than enough stiffness in the alloy handlebar

and stem to make sure that things don't noticeably bend or buckle when you get out of the saddle to give it full beans. But what really gives the Strada 5000 Di2 a clear lead over a lot of the bikes around £3000 we've tested this year when it comes to realising its full performance potential are the wheels. A lot of companies have managed to keep the price of their Ultegra Di2 bikes lower by fitting heavier Mavic Aksium or Fulcrum wheels that sit around the 3kg mark with tyres, tubes and cassette. The new DT Swiss Spline R23 wheels – shod with our favourite Schwalbe Ultrero ZX-HD rubber – roll in at just over 2.4kg to give the Strada impressive responsiveness at every speed and gradient intensity.

A full Ultegra setup including chain and cassette, not just the motorised highlights, keeps everything as flawlessly smooth as Shimano intended. The top-quality triple compound rubber also means you can pull harder and later on the

powerful Ultegra brakes, or choose to leave them untouched in favour of leaning over further, carrying your speed through corners. The same frame and fork stiffness that helps when the road rises gives crisp clarity on descents. When it comes to taking traction to the limits, you've really got to be taking real liberties on very long, very fast hills to get the front end to flutter at all. Combined with the firm Fizik Ardea saddle and chunky alloy seatpost and stem, this means you'll be well aware of what you're riding over. It's a firm but fair level of feedback – rather than an unnecessarily punishing ride – and a comfort compromise our more performance-minded testers were more than happy to make to guarantee taking the hurt to others on the hills. www.flidistribution.co.uk

HIGHS Well balanced; responsive wheels
LOWS Firm ride; kit ripe for upgrading

CYCLING PLUS **RATING** ★★★★★

SPECIFICATION **WEIGHT** 7.47kg (55cm) **FRAME** Carbon monocoque **FORK** Carbon 1½-1¼in steerer
GEARS Shimano Ultegra Di2 **BRAKES** Shimano Ultegra **WHEELS** DT Swiss Spline R23 **FINISHING KIT** Ritchey Pro Logic II bar, Pro 4-axis stem, Fizik Ardea saddle, Schwalbe Ultrero ZX-HD 23mm tyres



The DT Swiss rims are paired with Schwalbe's high quality Ultramo tyres



Great braking and very slick electronic shifting from Shimano Ultegra



The Ritchey cockpit provides plenty of feedback and makes for a pretty firm ride



The steel Audax lives up to its name, and is ideal for very long rides

SPA CYCLES STEEL AUDAX

£1200 > Stylish steel steed for long days in the saddle

Last year we tested Spa Cycles' titanium Audax. The steel Audax, in Reynolds' classy 725, looks similar, weighs barely any more and is 250 quid cheaper. But can old-school material match more modern titanium out on the road?

In short, yes. Just as with dearer titanium, the steel Audax with its curved carbon fork is perfectly set-up and kitted out for the rigours of long-distance riding. SRAM's Apex gears – combining an 11-32 cassette with a compact chainset – provide all the range you'll ever need, with crisp gear changes and the added advantage of ergonomic hoods that are comfortable to ride on. The semi-flattened bar top is a great shape, while the Passport saddle is deeply padded and comfortable. About the only downside are the Miche deep drop brakes, not a patch on SRAM's.

The handbuilt wheels are tough, Schwalbe's Durano tyres likewise, the 105 hubs super-smooth. Its 10kg weight might count against it if you're riding fast sportive-style events, but for poised and polished mile-eating rides regardless of terrain the steel Audax will take some beating – unlike your backside – as you rack up smooth mile after smooth mile. Full mudguards make it a year-round machine, while rack mounts mean you can use it for touring, shopping and commuting, adding versatility to its comfort.

www.spacycles.co.uk

SPECIFICATION WEIGHT 10.05kg (56cm)
FRAME Reynolds 725 **FORK** Carbon **GEARS** SRAM Apex **BRAKES** Miche dual pivot **WHEELS** Shimano 105 hubs, Rigidia Chrina rims **FINISHING KIT** Deda Fluida RHM02 bar, Passport Navigator saddle, Schwalbe Durano 25mm tyres, mudguards

HIGHS Comfort, gearing and a top ride
LOWS Average brakes are our only gripe

CYCLING RATING ★★★★★