



Tech spec

KONA SUTRA SE

Price: £1,899
(reduced to £1,599 at time of writing).
Sizes: 48, 50, 52
(tested), 54, 56, 58cm.
Weight: 14.5kg
(32lb).
Frame & fork: Butted chrome-moly steel, six pairs of bosses, thru-axle; Kona Project 2 Cromoly Disc Touring fork, four bosses on each leg, thru-axle.
Wheels: 42-622 Schwalbe Marathon Mondial tyres, WTB ST i23 TCS 2.0 rims, 36 stainless black 14g spokes front and rear, Formula hubs.
Transmission: Prowheel 26-36-48 chainset, Prowheel 73mm BSA bottom bracket, Shimano Deore chain, Shimano Deore 11-36 cassette. MicroShift bar-end shifters, Shimano Deore derailleurs. 10 ratios, 20-121in.
Braking: Tektro RRA-L levers, TRP Spyre-C callipers, 160mm rotors.
Steering & seating: Kona cork tape, 44cm Kona Road handlebar (52cm across drops), 60mm Kona Road stem, FSA No.1/No.10 headset. Brooks B17 saddle, 27.2mm Kona Deluxe Thumb offset seatpost, Kona seat clamp.
Equipment: Mudguards with mud flaps, 25kg-capacity rear rack. konaworld.com

An all-steel tourer with everything required for big adventures on tarmac and beyond... **Simon Withers** reviews the Kona Sutra SE

These days you can buy aluminium or titanium tourers with double or single chainrings, but a traditional steel frameset with a touring-friendly triple chainset will still better suit many cyclists. Kona's Sutra SE even comes with a Brooks saddle. It is neatly TIG-welded in Taiwan rather than being brazed and lugged in the Midlands like the British tourers of yesteryear.

It's very well considered for heavily laden long-distance touring, with little to fault. Unlike the Sonder Santiago I tested recently, the Sutra has the low (20in) bottom gear you need for loaded expeditions in hilly areas. The bar-end shifters are old school but effective. The left-hand lever has a super-light, non-indexed action, so you can eliminate front-mech rub, while the right has



Top: Bottom gear is 26/36, which is fine for loaded touring
Bottom: Tektro Spyre-C cable discs provide reliable braking

precise indexing throughout the range. The drivetrain shifts smoothly and that bottom gear bails you out on steeper climbs.

The cable-operated disc brakes and wide tyres are pretty much what I'd have chosen. The brakes are consistent in all weathers, even if they require more effort than hydraulic stoppers, and they're easy to fix and fettle. Thru-axes help to make the most of them. Schwalbe Marathon Mondial tyres roll smoothly on tarmac, with the shoulders offering greater grip on gravel and broken surfaces, and they have an effective

reflective strip. I'd have picked a different saddle than the venerable Brooks B17 but I know it's popular.

I couldn't question the Sutra SE's comfort overall – nor the number of bosses (six pairs on the frame), which

provide plenty of luggage- and bottle-carrying options. The handling is light, and the flared bar offers excellent steering leverage. I'd go for a longer stem than the 6cm one fitted, though that's an inexpensive and easy change to make.

The frame geometry is what you'd expect, with a relaxed head angle and a metre-plus wheelbase for stability. The result is that the Kona Sutra SE is a lovely long-distance cruiser for touring, bikepacking and gravel riding. It's comfortable, has stable handling and is ready to roll when you buy it. 🍇

SONDER SANTIAGO
RIVAL 22 GRAND
TOURER £1,799.99

Steel tourer with guards, rear rack and high-quality British-built wheels – though you might need a lower bottom gear for loaded touring.

alpkit.com



SPA CYCLES D'TOUR ▶
725 DISC TOURER
9SPD £1,395

Reynolds-725-framed, triple-chainset-equipped tourer with handbuilt wheels, Brooks saddle, mudguards and Tubus rear rack.

spacycles.co.uk



Fully equipped steel tourer with a lovely plush ride, a super upright and comfortable riding position, an excellent gear range and more bosses than [old joke alert!] British Leyland. (As Cycle went to press, it looked like the Kona brand would be sold. Bikes remained available.)