



Cycle's test promise

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Nicer wheels: an upgrade option



Designed in North Yorkshire



Classic looks, modern spec

between the finishing kit of the bikes. Both have perfectly serviceable aluminium components – own brand for the Cannondale, Deda for the Spa. I had no issue with either saddle. Both bikes use high-quality bar tape with gel padding, which is good to see as it's an area where some brands cut corners.

The ride

Both bikes offer ample long-distance comfort. You might look at the oversized tubes of the Cannondale and think the resulting ride would be as hard as Jason Statham. The chunkier main triangle, tapered steerer and front thru-axle do provide a more planted feel, especially when riding out of the saddle. But the slimline seatstays, which change profile along their length, help take the edge off rough road surfaces, and the narrower seatpost surely helps.

The Synapse handles confidently even on unsurfaced tracks like towpaths, and with wider tyres could tackle more adventurous routes. You barely feel the extra weight over the Spa even on steeper climbs, and its lower bottom gear helps out in any case.

You can choose whichever clichés you like about steel but there really is a zing to the Spa Audax, which has a lovely, lively ride.

Other options



TREK DOMANE AL3 DISC
[2022-2023] £1,100

Trek's 'smooth, stable and super fun road bike' comes with an aluminium frame, Shimano Sora, Tektro cable disc brakes, 32mm tyres, and mounts for mudguards and a rear rack. trekbikes.com



VITUS SUBSTANCE V-2 GRAVEL SORA
£899.99

Nominally a gravel bike, the well-priced aluminium Substance comes with 40mm tyres and mounts for everything. It looks like it would make a versatile all-rounder, commuter bike and more. vitusbikes.com

Even though the bottom gear is a tad higher than the Cannondale's, the Spa's lower weight helps on climbs. It's fine when riding in or out of the saddle, and slightly to my surprise provided to be decently zippy when I put the hammer down (as much as I can these days).

With my thick winter overshoes on, there was a tiny amount of toe overlap with the Spa's front mudguard – although not with the tyre or sans overshoes. It wasn't enough to concern me but you might want to check Spa's geometry tables. The Synapse's front-centres measurement is 10mm longer so I had no toe overlap on that, and wouldn't expect any even with a front mudguard fitted. ●

Verdict

Both the Spa Audax and Cannondale Synapse deliver on their promise of long-distance comfort. They also have the fittings necessary for riding in manky weather on audax-type rides, commutes, training rides, and club runs. The Spa even comes with mudguards.

If you're not looking to stray away from tarmac or fit (much) larger tyres, Spa's Audax is an all-day cruiser with classy looks and oodles of comfort. The Cannondale is a well-priced all-rounder that balances stiffness, comfort and versatility well.