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Van Nicholas Yukon

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Van Nicholas Yukon, frame only (no fork or headset) from £730.00, complete bikes from £1590.00

With the increasing popularity of Audax, Etape riding and fast day rides, along with 'credit card' tours where only light luggage is carried, it follows that the demand for bikes that are specifically aimed at fast paced, high mileage rides yet offering an element of comfort has also grown.

Most manufacturers will have a model that tries to cater for this demand in slightly different ways. From the larger manufacturers we have, for example, the fair weather Specialized Roubaix range and Trek currently have their Pilot range to name just two. The smaller specialist European titanium manufacturers like Enigma and Van Nicholas, tested here, make theirs for the European market, with slightly larger clearances to take narrow guards as well as a pannier rack.

Fundamentally it is the frame geometry that make these bikes what they are; the seat tube angles are similar to what you would find on a full-on race bike, whereas the head tube will have a slightly shallower angle to give a bit more comfort. The 56cm Yukon here has a 73 degree seat angle with 72 at the head; a race bike would normally be 73/73.

As Van Nicholas offer a custom service where you can choose each and every component to suit both your budget and requirement, I will concentrate more on the bike's riding characteristics than each component.

The Yukon frame is designed in Holland by the company's founder, Jan-Willem Sintnicolaas and built using 3AL/2.5V grade Titanium. The workmanship is first class; so much so that it can take some by surprise when they discover they are actually built in China, which is why of course the price is so competitive. Alloy bars and stem plus carbon forks are also Van Nicholas branded, the latter with a gradual rake. With SKS narrow guards fitted allowing for 700 x 25 tyres (with just enough room for a light 28c tyre) there is slight toe overlap which again shows that this is no long wheelbase, heavy-duty touring bike, the emphasis being more on performance.

Cruising along, it feels comfortable and stable. Unloaded and riding on a flat level road, it feels quick; never quite as quick as a full on race bike but relatively fast nonetheless. If I had to highlight the difference of riding this style of geometry makes over a race bike, then personally I would say I only notice a slight drop off in performance when climbing or sprinting out



of the saddle. The rest of the time it is much closer, which is exactly what they claim it is designed to be.

Titanium lends itself well to bikes like these, which by their very nature seldom lead a precious life that many race bikes enjoy. In many ways an evolution of steel, relatively light, durable, robust and very comfortable, won't even rust, titanium is as near a bike for life as it is possible to get; this one hasn't even got any paint to chip! In conclusion, if you want a well made, fast, mile eating, weather-resistant, durable bike, then the Van Nicholas Yukon is worth considering.

Verdict

A well made, fast, mile eating, weather resistant, durable bike

✓ Fast, comfy and bomb-proof

✗ A touch of toe overlap

Performance **9**

Value **9**

Overall **9**

• www.vannicholas.com

