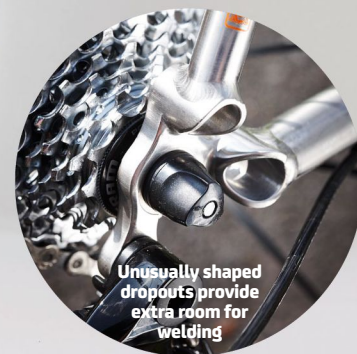




The shortest head-tube here creates a more aggressive riding position



Unusually shaped dropouts provide extra room for welding

# VAN NICHOLAS CHINOOK

**£2085** ▶ Fast, low and aggressive but with titanium character in spades

**V**an Nicholas only makes titanium bikes, and it's been doing so for many years. The Chinook is pitched as a racer, promising 'sprint performance and precision handling'.

While much of its frame is entirely conventional, the rear dropouts are highly distinctive. They're machined into a complex shape that includes a pair of short tubular sections each side, giving a usefully big area to which the seat and chainstays are welded.

Buying a Van Nicholas comes with a few less tangible, but no less real, benefits. The crash replacement policy is a good one – a new frame for half the

## SPECIFICATION

**WEIGHT** 7.96kg (56cm)

**FRAME** 3Al/2.5V titanium

**FORK** Full carbon

**GEARS** SRAM Apex

**BRAKES** SRAM Apex

**WHEELS** Mavic Ksyrium Elite

**FINISHING KIT** VNT Elements bar and stem, Van Nicholas titanium seatpost, Fizik Arione saddle, 23mm Vredestein Fortezza TriComp tyres

price if you manage to break it – and the company will reissue the lifetime warranty to second owners. And there's a custom geometry option should none of the stock sizes quite work for you.

The chain peg on the inside of the right-hand chainstay is a rare feature these days, but having somewhere to hang the top run of chain when the rear wheel's out is much tidier than just letting it all hang slack.

Customisation is one of Van Nicholas's selling points, with a range of standard component packages supplemented by a bunch of configurable options. You can change wheels, stem, bar, saddle, seatpost and various other bits prior to ordering. The test bike arrived with a SRAM Apex groupset, not the most obvious choice for a bike with half an eye on racing, but a solid performer.

Among the finishing kit was a Van Nicholas titanium seatpost. It's a decent enough post, but the rough microtexture of titanium means that the seat clamp bolts tend to gall and make nasty noises.

For the same reason, it doesn't move that smoothly in the frame either. Once set up, though, all was fine, and the slightly springy post seems to add to the comfort of the ride.

We'll admit to a degree of scepticism as to the Chinook's promised sprint performance, given the relatively small tube diameters – nothing about the frame screams stiffness. But it confounded expectations, with a serious kick when needed. There's clearly something to that old thing about books and covers. The Chinook has a taut, springy feel that can be used to great effect. Get your efforts in sync with →

## WORKSHOP VIEW...

The old school chain 'pip' – or peg – mounted to the inside of the driveside seatstay is a real boon when you remove the wheel in the workshop, and is handy for travelling too.

Get your efforts in sync with the spring of the frame and it takes off, in a quite addictive fashion



Despite its pace, the Van Nicholas is supple and forgiving

the spring of the frame and it properly takes off, in a quite addictive fashion. The aggressive riding position – the Chinook has the shortest head-tube here – helps.

Unlike some of the bikes here, the Van Nic feels a lot like you'd expect a titanium frame to feel. Despite its pace, it's supple and forgiving. There's ample comfort for a long day out, although you'll need to be happy to work with the race-sharp steering and low riding position.

**VERDICT** The closest bike here to the stereotypical classic titanium feel

**CYCLING RATING** ★★★★★

**WE SAY...**

▲ **HIGHS** Good value and a characterful ride with an impressive turn of speed

▼ **LOWS** It's a little twangy for heavy riders and Apex isn't the best choice for racing

► **BUY IF...** You want a modern yet classic Ti bike with plenty of custom options

**ALSO CONSIDER...**



**FOR A LITTLE MORE...**  
**VAN NICHOLAS ASTRAEUS**  
£3140

Van Nicholas's flagship frame with hydroformed and machined tubing, 3D sculpted dropouts, a tapered head-tube, press-fit bottom bracket and Shimano 105.



**FOR A LITTLE LESS...**  
**VAN NICHOLAS VENTUS SE**  
£1725

Van Nicholas's entry-level has the same SRAM Apex parts as our test Chinook, but a simpler frame with plain-gauge tubing and flat rather than 3D dropouts.