

# First ride: Tommasini VLC-3

David racks up the miles in Italy on one of Italy's finest hand-built carbon road bikes

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**This is the Tommasini VLC-3, the latest model from the Italian brand that started life in 1948. The company is still very much a family run affair - founder Irio Tommasini is still at the helm - and while many Italian bike companies have shifted production to the Far East over the last couple of decades, Tommasini still produce its frames by hand in Grosseto, in the Tuscany region of Italy.**



The VLC-3 is a full carbon fibre frame built using Tommasini designed tubing and constructed using the tube-to-tube process. It's a similar technique being used by other high-end frame brands, the likes of Sarto and Legend. A benefit of this process is that it allows Tommasini to offer a full bespoke frame option, so if the stock sizes don't suit or fit, you can get a custom frame instead.



As you'd expect of a modern carbon fibre frame, the VLC-3 is packing some of the latest design features, the sort we've come to take for granted these days in high-end frames. There's the tapered head tube (1 1/8in to 1 1/2in), carbon fibre dropouts, press-fit bottom bracket, internal cable

routing and, if you want it, the option of an integrated seatmast. Weight for a 56cm frame is a claimed 960g.



And the price? It's £2,750 for the frame and fork, and that's the same whether you choose a stock size (there are eight sizes) or go down the custom geometry route. Tommasini also offer a stack of custom paint options, so if green isn't your colour, there are plenty more choices.



Tommasini supplied (and personally delivered to our hotel) a VLC-3 built up with a Campagnolo Chorus 11-speed groupset, Miche SWR Full Carbon RC Clincher wheels, Vittoria Open Pave 23mm tyres and FSA/Deda finishing kit.



On the scales all that kits adds up to 7.64kg (16.84 lb).

## First ride impressions

So what's it like to ride? Well I've been Italy for a week on the road.cc Italy Week trip, and before the Tommasini arrived, I spent some time on a Merida Ride, an endurance road bike designed with comfort in mind, with a tall head tube and 25mm tyres as standard. And jolly nice it was too, very comfortable on the rough and rattly roads in this part of Italy. Rough roads? Yes, honestly, you wouldn't believe the state of some of the roads out here.



Getting onto the Tommasini, with its traditional long-and-low race bike geometry, carbon fibre wheels and 23mm tyres, and I was expecting the ride to be much firmer and harsher in comparison to the Merida. But it wasn't. The Tommasini proved to be as smooth and compliant as the Merida.

The frameset, wheels and tyres worked in combination to provide a beautiful suppleness. The geometry proved comfortable too: I racked up the miles on the Tommasini to be sure, and even during the 210km recce of the 2015 Giro d'Italia stage during the week, I didn't find the VLC-3 uncomfortable at all.

Then there's the handling. This bike corners like the tyres are glued to the road. In the hills surrounding Riccione there are nearly every conceivable variety of corner imaginable, from fast open bends to tight and steep hairpins, a really good way to test a bike. Through every corner, the Tommasini blew me away with how easily it handled the turns.



The steering provides plenty of feedback and combined with the grippy Vittoria tyres and stiff carbon fibre wheels, the Tommasini carves through the corner. It's very well balanced. During the turn-in phase of the corner there's plenty of feel from the tyres, and sets you up to exit at full speed. It's the most wonderfully fun bike to descend on. I had a real hoot on the Italian roads.

The VLC-3 feels fast. It's quick and agile, it's quite a vivid ride experience. There's a fluidity to the way it flows and carves along the road. It's a very stable and neutral bike and it easily lets you exploit the full potential of the frameset. I only spent the week with the Tommasini, but my first impressions are that there's no question this is a very talented bike.

Exquisite handling, smoothness and comfort make the VLC-3 a standout bike, and it doesn't fall short of its rivals at this

price.

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