

# Trek Émonda SLR Custom

Just when we thought road bikes couldn't get any lighter, Trek manages to shave off a few more grams



Words STU BOWERS



## THE SPEC

**Model**  
Trek Émonda SLR Custom

**Groupset**  
Shimano Dura-Ace 9000

**Deviations**  
None

**Wheels**  
Bontrager Aeolus 3 D3 Clincher

**Finishing kit**  
Bontrager XXX Integrated bar-stem combo and Bontrager Paradigm RXL carbon saddle

**Price**  
£7,080

**Contact**  
trekbikes.com

Trek already has two race-winning road bikes in its line-up – the aero-tuned Madone and the cobble-slaying Domane – so when the Wisconsin-based company announced it was launching a completely new road platform, it was hard to fathom where it might go next. In the end it chose to take on one of the oldest and fiercest battles in bike building – simply to be the lightest.

### Defining the target

The goal for the engineers was straightforward – elevate Trek to the top of the weight race with the lightest production road bike in the world (and then create another bike name using the same six letters as the Madone and Domane).

It's important to make a distinction here between lightest 'frame' and lightest 'production bike'. The Émonda frame has a claimed weight of 690g for a painted 56cm, so can't lay claim to being the skimpiest out there

(although it's not far off). However, what Trek has done is taken a holistic approach to the entire build, to arrive at a staggering 4.6kg (10.2lb) complete bike weight for its range-topping SLR 10 model, enough to crown it as the lightest production model on the planet.

You could argue that's a slightly hollow victory, because at this price point – the SLR 10 costs £11,000 – who goes for 'production' anyway? And as soon as you start thinking outside the box for spec choices, the weight can soon come off practically any production bike. But, as they say, a win's a win. What's crucial, however, is that Trek has done more than just make one superlight flagship. It has created an entire range, using the same exhaustive approach to each model to achieve 'best in class' weight and specification at every level.

Our test bike is a custom spec, based around the top SLR 700 series OCLV frameset, and includes a Dura-Ace 9000 mechanical groupset (with direct



## BAR STEM

The Bontrager XXX integrated OCLV carbon bar stem saves 70–100g and includes the super-neat Blender mount for your Garmin or other hardware.

**SEAT MAST**

No component escaped investigation by the engineers to see if grams could be shed. The seat mast was pared down to create a new ultra light version.

mount brakes front and rear), Bontrager Aelous 3 D3 wheelset and the all-new Bontrager XXX integrated bar stem, showcasing all of the new technologies Trek has on offer. You can buy the very same bike through Trek's Project One programme – complete with highly attractive (in our opinion anyway) powder blue paint colour, and it would set you back £7,080. That puts it squarely between two off-the-shelf models – the Shimano Dura-Ace 9070 Di2 equipped SLR 9 at £7,899 and the Dura-Ace 9000 specced SLR 8 at £5,800.

It graced our scales at 6.2kg, more than half a kilo under the allowable weight limit for pro bikes. 'All you have to do is pick it up to understand what [the Émonda concept] is about,' says Trek's road product manager Ben Coates. 'For the consumer, weight is very quantifiable, both when you lift it and when you ride it. Everyone wants lightweight. The person who spends £1,500 wants lightweight, just like the guy that spends £15,000. The benefits are there across the board. It is a quantifiable benefit that every [level of] rider will appreciate.'

Crucially though, Coates adds, 'Superlight only plays when it rides super great.' Which sounds like our cue to take the Émonda for a spin.

**'The Émonda graced our scales at 6.2kg, more than half a kilo under the weight limit for pro bikes'**

**Power to weight**

I have to agree with Coates. A lighter bike (assuming it has good build quality) adds a tangible and instantly gratifying element to the ride experience. Sure, it's a plus if your bike handles smoothly, and some aerodynamic profiling is always a bonus as well, but I believe there's more currency in something that accelerates effortlessly and makes you feel like a superstar uphill. Let's face it, hills are where most of us gauge our performances, and climbing prowess is for the most part about power versus weight. And Coates is right about the shop floor point too. Picking a bike up is the first thing (OK, maybe the second thing – after squeezing the brakes repeatedly) that customers do.

Shedding weight from a frame is always a case of striking a balance, trimming grams where it won't affect the ride quality and optimising lay-ups so that every single strand of carbon serves a purpose. Trek appears to have got the mix spot on with the Émonda. It didn't take long to impress me. On my very first ride – which happened to be a large chunk of stage one of this year's Tour De France in Yorkshire – I felt immediately at one with the Émonda. I'd describe the feeling as riding 'in' the bike rather than 'on' it, something that for a micro-adjuster like myself usually takes a fair amount of time and fettling to get right.

The rolling Yorkshire landscape, and the Buttertubs Pass in particular, were early opportunities for the Émonda to show what it was capable of. It seemed to



## ‘It’s a dream to ride uphill, and it carries on delivering over the top and down the other side’

gain, and hold on to speed with ease on the undulating lanes, in or out of the saddle, but pointing it up the bigger climbs was where it really showed its true colours. It’s a beautiful sensation when a bike feels like it’s genuinely making a climb easier for you. The Émonda showed no signs of being flappable under even my most aggressive hill efforts, and with such low weight it was like having a few extra watts on tap. I wondered, a few days later, as I watched Jens Voigt on TV powering over the Buttertubs on his Émonda at the head of the Tour de France, whether he too was thankful for its benefits.

I’ve since travelled to Italy, and all over my regular Dorset stomping grounds with the Émonda, and not once have I come back disappointed. It’s a dream to ride uphill, and it carries on delivering over the top and down the other side. I haven’t, in over two months of testing, found a chink in the Émonda’s armour. The Bontrager Aeolus 3 D3 wheels are a superb complement to the bike – light and stiff enough to accelerate quickly when you lay down the power. The only glitch is the supplied cork brake pads’ performance in the wet, which left me white-knuckle braking in the Dolomites in a heavy downpour. But that’s an easy and inexpensive fix.

There is a lot more to a great bike than just being light, but when the rest of the aspects are as good as on the Émonda, then it’s always going to be hard to dismiss weight as a deciding factor in a bike’s performance. I’ll genuinely miss it once this review is published and the bike is returned, and I’m already pondering how to reconfigure my all-time top three, to give it a well-deserving place. ❁



**REAR BRAKE**  
Trek is one of the first manufacturers to use a direct-mount rear brake in this traditional seatstay position. Plus points are increased tyre clearance and the ability to shave further weight from seatstays.

### The detail



Trek’s new Duo Trap S is one of the neatest solutions we’ve seen for integrating data capture into the frame design. The sensor, sitting almost out of sight within the confines of the left chainstay, allows both a wheel magnet and crank magnet to calculate your speed and cadence. The latest version works on both ANT+ and Bluetooth platforms, which means it will pair with just about every device on the market. It’s further evidence, along with the Blender bar mount and the integration of the 3S chain catcher, that Trek is thinking about every aspect of the ride and minimising the clutter associated with current trends.