

# Prorides

The bikes of the peloton





# LOVE, HONOUR AND ORBEA

This is a big year for Orbea; the Spanish brand has a new pro team in Cofidis, celebrates its 175th anniversary and the seventh generation of the Orca hits the road. Eh, Marcel?

WRITER: Marcel Wüst || PHOTOGRAPHER: Kai Dudenhöfer



▼ The internal cable routing through the chainstay for the Dura-Ace Di2 drivetrain is as neat as it gets

▼ The bottom bracket shell is massive, with a seat-tube brace on the non-drive side and huge chainstays



**T**his new Orbea Orca probably had more public exposure than any other bike I've ever ridden for this feature. It arrived in Majorca really early ahead of our planned test and because I get the bikes shipped to a local bike store, Ciclo Gomilla, which happens to be an Orbea dealer, it stood on display for about two months before I had time to start riding it. Being the new top model, it turned many heads and with all the features added to the frame during its latest makeover it seems to be a totally re-engineered bike.

Instead of just over 1,100 grams, the frame is said to be pretty close to the 900g mark, at least for my size 53 test bike, and it still keeps the stiffness necessary to be a reliable servant for the top pros. From this season, Cofidis is the lucky team riding the Orca and their sprinter Nacer Bouhanni stated, that "It is the fastest bike I've ever ridden." Okay, so we know that as an ambassador for a brand, which all pros automatically are, you have say stuff like this. Having also tested Cofidis's previous bike, the Look 695 Aerolite, I know that was a pretty fast bike, too.

The new 2015 Orca not only looks totally different, the geometry has changed as well. Orbea's Race Geometry with a longer reach



▲ The optional blue/pink colour scheme looks fresh; there is a plain black if you're more conservative

▶ This top-spec bike comes with Vision's stable, fast and light Metron 40 carbon clincher wheelset



is claimed to put the rider in a flatter and more aerodynamic position on the bike. That's definitely a sought-after trait in the pro peloton but it's more likely to be the start of a terrible backache for less well trained and experienced riders.

For me it was fine just the way it rolled out of the shop, and because it had caught my attention every time I rode or drove past Ciclo Gomilla, I was really keen to find out how it would handle. In terms of the looks, I would have preferred the all-black version because pink and a funny blue are not so much my colours but when I threw a leg over it, I soon forgot about that.

The new frame definitely feels different to the several previous iterations of the Orca that I've ridden. There is an immediate feeling of comfort, which I'd guess is the result of replacing the aero seatpost with a classic round one. Most of the old Orcas were shaped futuristically with aero tubes, whereas this one has much more of a classic look and feel. I still like that.

I enjoyed zooming around, shifting up and down easily with the perfectly adjusted Di2 levers as I rode the Orca towards the sunset on the northern coast. Usually the manufacturers tell us that their new models are lighter and stiffer and better in every

**ORBEA'S RACE GEOMETRY WITH A LONGER REACH IS CLAIMED TO PUT THE RIDER IN A FLATTER AND MORE AERODYNAMIC POSITION**



## Specifications

**Frame:** Orbea Orca OMR  
**Fork:** Orbea Orca OMR, full carbon  
**Groupset:** Shimano Dura-Ace Di2  
**Crankset:** Shimano Dura-Ace  
**Brakes:** Shimano Dura-Ace  
**Chainrings:** 50/34  
**Cassette:** 11-25  
**Wheels:** Vision Metron 40 CC  
**Tyres:** Vittoria Open Corsa CX  
**Headset:** FSA  
**Handlebar:** FSA K-Force  
**Stem:** FSA OS-99 Carbon  
**Seatpost:** FSA K-Force Light  
**Saddle:** Prologo Scratch 2 Tirox  
**Weight:** 6.7kg (inc pedals)  
**Price:** £8,099, \$10,799  
[www.orbea.com](http://www.orbea.com)

## I DIDN'T SHIFT TO THE SMALL RING UNTIL I FELT THAT I'D GIVEN THE ORCA MY BEST EFFORTS, WHICH IT HANDLED WITH EASE

way. The lightness was easy to test with my bike scale – with pedals, this Orca weighs a non-UCI legal 6.7kg!

Unless you take a frame to a laboratory for testing, it is quite hard to tell if the BB stiffness has increased or decreased by the five or 10 per cent claimed, and that still wouldn't tell you about the sensations it gives you on the road. My Orbea felt really stiff and handled really well. The almost rectangular chainstays with the slightly curved seatstays transported my pedal power smoothly onto the road. The press fit BB is said to be ready to accommodate all types of power meters – an important

▲ Marcel really enjoyed the Orca's efficient power transfer when making hard efforts

feature for all pros and ambitious amateur riders, too. I did not have a power meter, or even a basic computer, just the sun in my spokes and on my back as I pedalled towards the quiet slopes of La Victoria. On the main road, with many roundabouts to negotiate and a bit of traffic to deal with, I felt a bit like a bike courier sprinting past cars in traffic jams and zig-zagging around pedestrians who were crossing the red lights in Alcludia. It was an unusual but fun chance to enjoy the handling agility.

When I finally turned off, I was happy to leave the traffic behind me. It was pretty hot so before tackling the switchbacks I bought a bottle of water, because I had forgotten to put a bidon cage on the bike before leaving. At over 30°C, riding conditions were perfect and I was keen to see how far I could push the Orca both uphill and down. The compact chainrings helped me to stay in the big ring for quite



a while on the climb and I didn't shift to the small ring until I felt satisfied that I'd given the Orca my best efforts, which it handled with ease. Only then did I change down and cruise up the last kilometre, enjoying the view over the bay of Pollença. The traffic reduced to nothing and the only people I met were four ladies of middle age, bravely fighting gravity on the steepest slope which is some 15 per cent. I had just enough breath to offer them some quick encouragement before riding on.

When I arrived at the top I felt like the water I'd drunk about 25 minutes ago had all evaporated. I went into the restaurant there and, instead of getting ripped off for a bottle of water, the kind *camarero* gave me a huge glass of water free of charge.

Now I was ready to meet Kai, the photographer, for some pics on the way down, and when I saw him parked in one of the switchbacks I slammed the brakes on and came to a sharp stop. The Dura-Ace calipers work perfectly with the Vision Metron 40 wheels – the Cofidis boys use the same brand and model for the wheels and it's amazing how much the braking

▲ Marcel hoped that riding with the sun behind him would hide his clashing kit and bike but alas, no

◀ The frame is ready for electronic or mechanical cables to run internally; Orbea call it EC/DC

performance for all of the wheel manufacturers has improved in recent years. I always know I can rely on Vittoria Open Corsa CX tyres, so I was looking forward to some cornering fun.

I'm really impressed with the handling of the Orca in the corners. On the switchback that Kai had chosen, I could brake late and zoom into the apex with lots of speed.

Kai said that he wanted to get the shot from another angle, so I'd get another few runs at the corner to edge up my speed.

This is how I teach beginners to corner effectively, building up the speed and getting a feel for everything, and I usually push it a bit further with every pass as well.

The fifth and sixth runs were almost perfect... and then I just got a bit cocky. A bit of dust, a degree too much lean, and away went my front wheel, dumping me and the bike on the floor. Luckily, there was no harm done to the body or bike, and only my brand new shoes finished with a nasty

**THE FIFTH AND SIXTH RUNS WERE ALMOST PERFECT... AND THEN I JUST GOT A BIT COCKY. A BIT OF DUST, A DEGREE TOO MUCH LEAN...**

▼ These are like normal Shimano Dura-Ace chainrings, only smaller



scratch mark on the heel. I was really annoyed but it's only the second time that I've crashed a test bike in all these years. At least you know that I really do push bikes to the limit when testing for you!

I took it a bit easier after that but I could still enjoy the very agile and direct handling. The front end is very precise and the added stiffness to the headtube is a well chosen improvement. I remember the older Orcas with the really aerodynamically shaped headtube were way more wobbly than this brand new model. The very slim lines of the headtube didn't detract from the rigidity at all and looking at it from the side clearly showed the reinforcement it has undergone in the last re-engineering process.

The 72.1° angle of my 53 cm frame felt a perfect match to the 43mm rake of the fork, leaving an impression of more agility than neutrality. The fork stiffness and comfort is perfect – the bike always feels pleasingly balanced from front to back.

The seat clamp, previously integrated and aero shaped, is now a traditional type and

▲ Marcel didn't really crash - the Orbea just fainted when it noticed those calves

► The FSA K-Force handlebar is a comfortable shape and very light

altogether the whole look of the new Orca is very different. It has been discussed at length on internet forums, as well as by the locals checking it out at the bike shop in Majorca, and opinions vary.

I must say, this is the best Orca I've ever ridden and the more traditional looks get both thumbs up from me. The agile geometry and stretched seating position suit me perfectly, and the specs of this high-end bike are spot on, too.

Just like the machines of the Cofidis pros, my test bike came with FSA components throughout: stem, handlebars, seatpost and headset. Cofidis even use FSA's crankset and brakes. I'm yet to try the brakes but it seems to be pretty much a mission impossible to generate any better braking performance than I experienced from the Dura-Ace callipers on my colourful Orca.

Because there are seven frame sizes, from 47 to 60cm, everyone should be able to get a great fitting bike, including all the Cofidis pros right from 165cm Clément Venturini to the ironically named 188cm Adrien Petit. There is also the option of a team replica paint job, so at least the pros will have kit to match their bikes – I hope you don't, if you go for the bike that I rode.

If your wallet can handle the big price, and you like the shape, you will love everything else about the Orca. ▣



**RIDDEN BY...**  
Grand Tour multi-stage winner  
**Marcel Wüst**



**Born:** Cologne, Germany  
6/8/1967  
**Residence:** Frechen, Germany; Majorca, Spain  
**Pro Career:** 1989 – 2001  
**First Team:** RMO  
**Career Highlights:** 14 Grand Tour stage wins  
1 Tour, 1 Giro, 12 Vuelta

*During his career as a top sprinter Marcel won stages in all three major tours. A bad crash in 2000 forced early retirement. He now works as a journalist and television pundit, as well as running cycling camps from his base in Majorca, Casa Ciclista. He stays enviably fit and pushes every test bike to its limits.*

**THERE IS ALSO THE OPTION OF A TEAM REPLICATED PAINT JOB, SO AT LEAST THE PROS WILL HAVE KIT TO MATCH THEIR BIKES**