

IT'S NEW BUT IS IT WORTH IT?

The full SP

FIRST RIDE

Is the new top-spec Ducati Monster SP worthy of its premium badge and price?

There's something evocative about an SP-badged Ducati. Back in the late 1980s and through the 90s they were money-no-object homologation specials, built to go World Superbike racing. Blood red icons such as the 888 SP series, or the 916 SP and its derivatives, were the stuff of motorcycling dreams.

It's been a badge of honour for the chosen ones ever since, with the odd 'R' thrown in for good measure. Now it's the fourth-gen Monster's turn to get the SP treatment.

Unlike those old Bologna superbikes, sprinkled with unobtainium like parmesan on a spicy plate of penne, the new £13,995 Monster SP, which is in dealers now, isn't 'full factory'. Instead, it's a regular production model and costs £2700 more than the base bike, which isn't bad when you look at the goodies included.

Designer labels

It shares the standard machine's 937cc 109bhp V-twin Testastretta engine and the cast all monocoque frame that caused all the hoo-ha when it replaced the old Monster's 1993 vintage steel trellis in 2021. The SP's specialness comes from a host of chassis mods, all designed to give the Ducati more poise in corners when you're pushing on: fully adjustable Öhlins, a steering damper, Brembo Stylema calipers and Pirelli Diablo Rosso IV rubber.

Weight is down 2kg to 186kg, fuelled and ready to go, thanks to a 1.7kg lighter lithium-ion battery, lighter brake disc flanges and forks to reduce unsprung weight. It comes with a MotoGP rep paintjob, Termignoni end cans, a nose fairing, rear seat cover and of course, that hallowed SP badge.

Like the standard Monster it has a hydraulic slipper clutch and the same electronics: a multi-function 4.3in colour dash, up/down quickshifter, fully adjustable cornering traction control and ABS, anti-wheelie and riding modes, including a new 74bhp Rain mode with extra electronic control for safety in the wet.

V-twin power

The engine is a gem. It has long, wallet-friendly service intervals, too: 9000 miles/two years between



Gold Öhlins and major attitude

'The SP is more of a giggle in the real world'

oil services and 18,000-mile valve checks. But it's amazing just how differently it behaves across various Ducatis: uninspiring in the Supersport, business-like in the Multistrada V2, perky in the standard Monster and downright bonkers in the Hypermotard. Weight, steering geometry and suspension stiffness seem to make all the difference.

It ticks all the right boxes in the new Monster SP and delivers Hypermotard-like thrills. Turn off the wheelie control and it's every bit as entertaining as the KTM 890 Duke R, Yamaha MT-09SP or Triumph Street Triple RS. It's the perfect engine for enjoying B-roads and small A-roads with all its good stuff happening at legal speeds. A Streetfighter V2 or V4 is faster, but the Monster SP is far more of a giggle in the real world. It's punchy down low, perfectly fuelled, easy to manage and with a host of rider aids on call to bail you out, safe, too.

B-road bliss

With an engine that doesn't stress the rider or chassis, the Monster has never tied itself knots on the throttle or been too hard turn. In SP guise the handling is even sharper. We got the chance to ride

Meet the family

There are three models in the Monster line up, all fitted with the same 109bhp 937cc Testastretta V-twin: the £11,295 base model, £11,595 Monster + with a fly screen and rear seat cover as standard and the all-singing £13,995 Monster SP.



'It's easily Ducati's most playful pure road bike'

Taller stance for a sporty attitude

a standard version during our test. It's fun, simple to ride and never does anything wrong. In tricky conditions its softer suspension is actually a positive, finding more grip from the tyres and pouring confidence into the rider, but on dry roads the SP shines.

A 20mm taller seat (up to 840mm) coupled with firmer Öhlins suspension pushes your weight over the front wheel. It gives the SP an aggressive, up-on-its-haunches supermoto-stance. The standard Monster sits lower at the rear and feels almost chopper-like by comparison. The SP's riding position smacks of a race bike with more feel on the way into corners. Suspension gives extra support without being harsh and the latest generation Pirellis (compared to the base model's Diablo Rosso III) are grippier, too.

It's tricky to feel the Brembo's superior power or use the extra ground clearance the taller ride height brings on a chilly February morning, but there's no question the SP can be pushed harder on warm, dry tarmac.

Why you should buy one

Is it worth £14k? Viewed as a stripped back, minimal naked, probably not and you'd need to be an SP anorak to notice the difference over the standard Monster. But it oozes quality and, ultra-focused Hypermotard aside, it's easily Ducati's most playful pure road bike and one that refreshingly, doesn't take itself too seriously.



So good it's even fun on a February day...

FEAST YOUR EYES



Return of the 'Termi'

It's hard not to think of Termignoni exhausts without thinking of the halcyon days of the 916. They're back on the Monster SP with two stacked end cans and carbon caps.



Top shelf suspension

The new SP's fully adjustable Öhlins units provide a firmer set-up than the base Monster's preload adjustable rear shock and (0.6kg heavier) non-adjustable forks.



Superbike brakes

Brembo Stylemas replace the standard bike's M4.32 Brembos. They give the Monster the look and power the SP label deserves with an ABS system that doesn't intrude.

MCN VERDICT

MICHAEL NEEVES CHIEF ROAD TESTER

'It's a match for its rivals'

With its firmer suspension, sportier riding position, stronger brakes and reduced weight the Monster's character transforms from mild-mannered roadster to something approaching Hypermotard levels of lunacy.

It's easily a match for its sporty middleweight naked rivals and with its grunty, easy to use V-twin engine it's more fun at B-road speeds than a Streetfighter V2 or V4. It isn't as 'factory' as SP badged Ducatis were back in the day, but it still has an air of specialness about it, is beautifully put together and well worth the extra £2700 over the base model for the extra excitement it brings.

THE FACTS

£13,995
Ducati Monster SP

Engine	937cc 8v V-twin
Frame	Castaluminium monocoque
Suspension	Öhlins 43mm forks and shock, fully adjustable
Frontbrake	2x320mm discs with four-piston radial Brembo Stylema calipers. Cornering ABS
Rearbrake	245mm disc with twin-piston Brembo caliper. Cornering ABS
Seatheight	840mm

109 bhp	63 lb.ft
186 kg (kerb)	14 litres

PCP DEAL	£142 per month x36	£3537.75 Total deposit payable
4000 Annual mileage	9.45% APR fixed	£8246 Optional final payment