



NOVARA FUSION

Tester: Andy Bruno
 Age: 38
 Height: 6'0"
 Weight: 175lbs.
 Inseam: 33"

VITAL STATS

Country of Origin: China
 Price: \$749
 Weight: 35.36lbs.
 Sizes Available: 16" 18" 20" (tested) and 15" Step Through
 Contact: www.novarabike.com

The Novara Fusion could be called the Cadillac of commuters. An ironic statement considering a city dweller could sell their Cadillac and get around town quite nicely on their Fusion. No car needed. It's not as good as macking in your Fleetwood, but there are many other virtues to bicycle commuting.

Novara describes the Fusion as their "luxury" commuter—and with good reason. It's decked out. The Fusion comes out of the box with just about everything you would need to commute to school, work, the grocery store, etc. Just throw a leg over and you're ready to roll.

Before moving on to the actual specifications of the bike and the various interesting bits and pieces, first I have to emphasize that the Fusion is an around town commuter bike. I know that means different things to different people, so I'll clarify. You wouldn't want to race on it. You wouldn't want to take it on singletrack. You probably wouldn't want to spend all day in the saddle on it, because it's not particularly light or fast. The Fusion is a well-appointed practical bicycle for commuting in street or work clothes. The novice rider will appreciate that it's easy to use and easy to maintain. It's the kind of bike that people ride all over the cities of Europe—only the luxury model.

The Fusion's 6061 aluminum frame and alloy fork are durable and get the job done. The frame includes mounts for a rear rack (rack included) and a single water bottle cage. There are, however, no mounts on the fork for a front rack. The frame and fork also include fender mounts and full fenders are included with the bike.

Two words describe the components used on the Fusion: low maintenance. The drivetrain is a Shimano Nexus 8-speed internal rear hub coupled with a Nexus 8-speed twist shifter. This gives the bike a good range of gears for most terrain. The front and rear hubs are equipped with Shimano internal roller brakes. Both the drivetrain and brakes require very little maintenance, which is a good thing, because they are both significantly more difficult to work on than their non-internal cousins. The crankset is an RPM City Single with a 46T chainring and a CNC alloy chainwheel disc guard to keep your trousers nice and clean.

The Fusion comes with Vittoria Randonneur 700x32 tires that are suitable for asphalt and dry hard-pack rail trails. A good third of my commute is on a packed gravel rail trail and I didn't have any problems at all in dry weather. As an added bonus the tires have reflective sidewalls for enhanced visibility on evening rides. In the winter months I swapped out the Randonneurs for a 700x32 'cross



Low-maintenance internal gearing.

tire with a little more tread. I couldn't go much larger than that with fenders attached. This set-up carried me through some very muddy, wet sections of the trail with relative ease. One note about changing tires on the Fusion—you must disconnect the internal drivetrain and brakes to take the wheels off. This sounds easy enough, but a quick read of the manual will save minutes, possibly hours of frustration.

No city commuter would be complete without lights, and they come standard on the Fusion. A front Shimano Dynamo hub provides the juice for a dual beam headlamp. The low beam light is always on to help traffic see you, and the high beam halogen light switches on automatically at night to help you see where you're going. While the high beam may be adequate if you're riding in the city at night under streetlights, I found that a second headlight is required in areas with low ambient light. And to be seen from behind, there's a battery-powered fender-mounted motion-activated red taillight. Again, I would recommend a second taillight, because the one that comes with the Fusion is small, and you can never have too many blinky lights. Other features include a Kallay Cozy Comfort handlebar, height adjustable stem, ergonomic grips, suspension seatpost, a handy kickstand, platform pedals, and a handlebar-mounted bell.

Yes, the Fusion is loaded with accessories. But how is the ride? The upright riding position is aggressive enough to hop curbs, but you know you're not on a beach cruiser. It's comfortable to ride because it's easy on the back and wrists and is adequately maneuverable in traffic. As I stated earlier, the bike isn't particularly light – weighing in at 35 pounds. Keep in mind, it's the journey not the destination. If you're taking a lot of stuff with you on your journey, the Fusion's rear rack easily accepts panniers and the bike rides well with them fully loaded. If this were my personal bike, I would try to shave off some pounds and start by removing suspension seatpost and kickstand. I would also include a full chain guard instead of the chainwheel disc guard.

The Novara Fusion is one of a few fully loaded city commuter bikes out there now. This type of bike has gained popularity with manufacturers in recent years, and with good reason. Not everyone wants to get decked out in their riding gear just to pedal across town to the grocery store. It's comfortable to ride, easy to use, and easy to maintain. The Fusion fits a niche and it comes loaded at a good price—that's way better than a Cadillac.



Commuting-ready: full fenders and integrated lights.