



Booth's always going in the wrong direction.

Kawasaki H2 SX SE

At the opposite end of the sports touring spectrum sits Kawasaki's all-new steed. The H2 SX SE is a beefed up and slightly detuned version of the megalomaniac, supercharged sensation H2. Unlike the 'Busa, it comes with (almost) all the fancy tech you would expect to see on an £18,099 motorcycle. Three power modes, traction control, quickshifter, even launch control (yeah I know, on a sports-tourer). The only thing it's lacking in the electronics department is semi-active suspension. It's Kawasaki's attempt at replicating the virtues of a big bore hypersports bike in a new, modern package.

After one look at the SE's styling, you could be forgiven for thinking it has just been rolled off the set of Tomorrow's World. Its sharp lines and angles couldn't be further from the Mr Blobby lookalike Hayabusa parked next to it. Before you throw a leg over the bike you notice the SE's big handlebar risers which look to facilitate a much less sporty and more

And they do. Aloft, the SE feels more like a big naked than a sports bike. Think Z1000SX, rather than ZX-10R. Once you have got your leg over (I wish), you're greeted with a full colour TFT dash which does funky things to your mind and the bike, when the ignitions fires into life. The SE enjoys the same generous steering lock as the 'Busa and despite only being 6kg lighter felt a good chunk more manageable at slow speeds.

Disappointingly you can't really hear the whistle of the supercharger below 8,000rpm so the ride through town was punctuated by frequent handfuls of clutch-in limiter bashing (don't tell Wheels) whenever there was a nice lady on the pavement. As expected, all of them had the same glint in their eyes and one of them actually threw her knickers at me... I think. Low down power is harsh and, particularly when riding slowly, you get an aggressive backlash of engine braking when you roll off the throttle. A quickshifter is always welcome and the SE was no exception to

the upshifts into second and third gear, at low revs. I found the bike behaved itself a lot more when I did these changes the old fashioned way with a bit of clutch.

Out on the open roads with a chance to open the Kawasaki up the shifter came into its own. Upshifts and downshifts, even at the big boys' end of the revs worked sublimely, with only the gentlest of touches needed. And when you are making it sing, like on the 'Busa, things don't half get silly. You're treated to power right from the off that just keeps building. The difference on the SE is, at speed, the higher screen offers more protection for a more comfortable and quieter ride.

Comfort-wise though, the Kwak doesn't win any prizes for its suspension. In its stock settings, bumpy roads are a lot bumpier on the SE than they are on the softly sprung 'Busa. But they are adjustable, and besides stiffer pogos do have their advantages. On the twisty roads of Lincolnshire, the SE was way more agile than anything with such heavyweight credentials

maintain the stability that we have come to expect from modern bikes. It was trustworthy and confidence inspiring, and didn't half egg you on to corner faster and faster.

In the interests of fairness I took the SE down the fast, sweeping road that I had previously taken the 'Busa down to see how it coped with the rolling bumps and undulations. I expected the stiff setup to cope with more decorum, which it did, but only marginally. While the Suzuki's soft suspension caused it to wallow itself into a tangle, the Kawasaki's stiff setup meant it bounced off the top of all the bumps causing the rear to spin, a bit of poo to come out, and the traction control to go into a right old tizzy... and rob me of the drive I was relying on to help the bike turn.

What you get with the Kawasaki is something that is fast, comfortable and easy to ride, but it's not a sportsbike, per se. It's arguably much broader than that, being just as suited to abusing your local B-roads as it is at powering you on arse

KAWASAKI H2 SX SE £18,099

Highlights

Supercharged goodness
Proper handling
Full electronics suite
137Nm of torque
160kg dry
197bhp

	BRAKING	7
<i>That'll do</i>		
	STABILITY	8
<i>Firm as you like</i>		
	AGILITY	8
<i>She can dance</i>		
	PERFORMANCE	9
<i>That supercharger!</i>		
	FUN	7
<i>We had plenty</i>		



BRUCE IN BRIEF



You could be forgiven for considering the H2 SX as something of a gimmick, what with all its shiny bits, smart tech and jet fighter soundtrack. But this bike's so much more than hype. It's an absolute weapon that effortlessly blurs the lines of ballistic pace with all-day riding comfort. If you couldn't already tell, I'm as hooked on this as 80s rock stars were on cocaine.

It's a real performer, with all the bells and whistles you could ever ask for... and then some. Launch control might not be at the top of the list when you're plucking your next sports-tourer out of a dealer's line-up, but hey, why the hell not? It sure makes the Kwacker stand out and the same goes for its cornering lights (on the SE version), and its characterful supercharger's buoyant delivery.

That thing certainly brings the goods to the party, and I for one found it pretty damn hard not to extract every bit of goodness from its added boost, which aurally chirped its merry head off every time I cracked the throttle, or bashed the bike down its 'box. I'm still not a fan of harsh initial pick-up or backlash every time you let off the gas, but you soon learn to forgive such foibles when you fully embrace the package on tap. It's comfy, more potent than Ron Jeremy after a night on Viagra, and handles like a good 'un. Sign me up.



What a pair of slappers.



Bruce won the prize for upright kneedown.

Verdict 8/10

A fast, brilliantly handling, comfortable sports-touring bike with all the electronic gizmos you could ever need.
+ LOADS OF TECH, SUPERCHARGED ENGINE, HANDLING
- A TAD STIFF, PRICE TAG