



The H2R's carbon fibre wings keep it planted at speed

with a violence that announced the bike's aggressive character. This didn't make the H2 easy to ride but sure made it exciting. I learned to dial in a touch of throttle before the apex, to avoid upsetting it midcorner.

Winding the throttle further sent the Ninja scorching forward, while I held on tight and flicked through the gearbox with the help of the quickshifter. The adjustable traction control helped keep the front wheel down, and the H2 charged so hard it just about reached its restricted 186mph top speed by the end of the straight. The only disappointment was the muted exhaust, which left the most memorable sound the supercharger's twittering on a closed throttle. UK bikes, however, will be fitted with a more stylish and tuneful carbon fibre Akrapovic can.

Handling was very good, though not supersport sharp – at 238kg the H2 is notably heavier. Its wide bars give decent agility, and Bridgestone slicks (though the

H2 will come with Battlax RS10FG street tyres) guarantee grip. Brembo brakes gave powerful, fade-free stopping, though the ABS cut in earlier than the best systems.

As a rapid roadster the H2 has plenty going for it, provided you're travelling light – there's no pillion seat, and don't think about risking that paint with a tankbag. The 17-litre tank limits range but the H2's respectable wind protection, excellent ride quality, comprehensive instrument panel and clear mirrors will add to its appeal.

Despite that, the Ninja H2 can't justify its price on overall performance or all-round ability. It makes sense only if you can live with its abrupt power delivery and value its unmistakable look, immaculate detailing, unique technology, and its ferocious, mind-altering acceleration. It's far from a bike for every rider, but it is a magical machine conceived to generate excitement and remind of Kawasaki's spirit – and which does exactly that.


## Riding the H2R

Two things about the H2R stand out above everything else: its astonishing speed, and the outrageous sound from its straight-through exhaust. The supercharged powerplant screamed out its 322bhp output and the Kawasaki stormed down the Losail straight at a rate no other production motorcycle could approach.

If I'd found the courage to get on the power a fraction earlier or harder out of the Losail circuit's final turn, I could possibly have carried an extra couple of mph all the way down the straight, and seen the digital speedo record 200mph before I braked for the first corner.

Then again, the H2R's power delivery might just have been too much even for the traction control and the sticky rear Bridgestone slick – in which case I'd have been spat so high that I would hardly have needed an ambulance to join the German rider who'd high-sided himself to Doha hospital from this spot the previous day.

In fact, the H2R was memorably faster and louder but no harder to ride than the H2, though it handled and braked even better thanks to its blend of near-identical chassis and the fact it carries 22kg less weight. And, in a way, that hint of menace epitomises the appeal of the Ninja H2R. This bike is mad, bad and slightly dangerous; an antidote to the modern world of increasingly fast but hi-tech, electronically controlled, safe and almost sensible superbikes.

Kawasaki are probably not just the only firm with the resources to develop it, but also the only one that would dare to put such an extreme machine into production. For that, we should all be truly grateful. 

## SPECIFICATION KAWASAKI NINJA H2 (H2R)

**Price** £22,135 (€41,000)

**Engine** 998cc dohc inline four, 4v per cyl, 1/c, supercharged

**Power** 207bhp @ 11,000rpm (322bhp @ 14,000rpm)

**Torque** 98lb.ft @ 10,500rpm (122lb.ft @ 12,500rpm)

**Transmission** 6-speed, chain

**Chassis** steel trellis

**Front suspension** 43mm usd forks, adjustable preload, rebound and compression

**Rear suspension** monoshock, adjustable preload, rebound and compression

**Front tyre** 120/70 ZR17 (120/600 R17 slick)

**Rear tyre** 200/55 ZR17 (190/650 R17 slick)

**Wheelbase** 1450mm

**Rake/trail** 24.5°/103mm (25.1°/108mm)

**Seat height** 825mm (830mm)

**Fuel tank** 17 litres

**Kerb weight** 238kg (216kg)

The H2 doesn't quite handle like a superbike, but it goes like nothing you've ever ridden

