



KEY SPECS



MAKER: Brocock, England (brocock.co.uk)

MODEL: Sahara XR

PRICE: From £1,244

TYPE: Semi-bullpup multi-shot PCP

CALIBRE: .177 (tested), .22 and .25

OVERALL LENGTH: 820mm

LENGTH OF PULL: 375mm

BARREL LENGTH: 430mm

WEIGHT: 3.3kg (without scope)

TRIGGER: Two-stage adjustable

POWER: 11.3 ft-lb on model tested (FAC versions available)



RIFLE TEST

KICKING UP A SANDSTORM

The proven Brocock XR range has been given a makeover in the form the Sahara edition, and Mat Manning reckons there's much more to it than eye-catching aesthetics

The cheekpiece and butt pad can quickly and easily be adjusted up and down to tweak gun fit for perfect eye/scope alignment

Brocock's new all-metal self-indexing magazine holds 13 shots in .177, 11 in .22 and 10 in .25. It is very pellet-friendly and easy to fill

A large sidelever provides a secure grip when cocking the gun and indexing the very reliable magazine



There is a great appetite for airguns that stand out from the crowd, and Brocock airguns usually meet that demand in their own way. The subject of this review goes a step further though, taking the proven reliability of the Sniper XR action and dressing it up in an eye-catching package.

The light sand finish is of course the standout feature of the £1,244 Sahara XR. It may not be to everyone's taste (and it isn't meant to be), but even as a shooter who rates traditional aesthetics very highly, I have to concede that the new twist does make for a nice-looking airgun. The pale shades may not be ideally suited to much of the British countryside, but they do look neat on the range.

TAKING STOCK

Measuring just under 82cm, the semi-bullpup Sahara tips the scales at 3.3kg before you fit a scope. It is a nicely proportioned airgun that feels very comfortable in the shoulder and, with a 4-16x50 MTC King Cobra scope mounted, its point of balance fell at the front of the trigger guard.



An adjustable two-stage match trigger ensures predictable shot release – a paddle-type safety catch is positioned in front of the blade

Brocock is a British gunmaker with a knack for making very functional, practical airguns. That remains the case with the Sahara XR, and is very apparent in the ambidextrous polymer stock which is built to withstand anything the weather and heavy-handed shooters can throw at it.

Anyone who is familiar with the Sniper XR will recognise the stock design. The forend is fairly short, and I often found my leading hand overshooting it and clutching the rear of the carbon air bottle. That is not a problem as it still makes for a comfortable hold. On the underside of the forend is an 80mm Picatinny accessory rail, which is nicely positioned for bipod attachment.

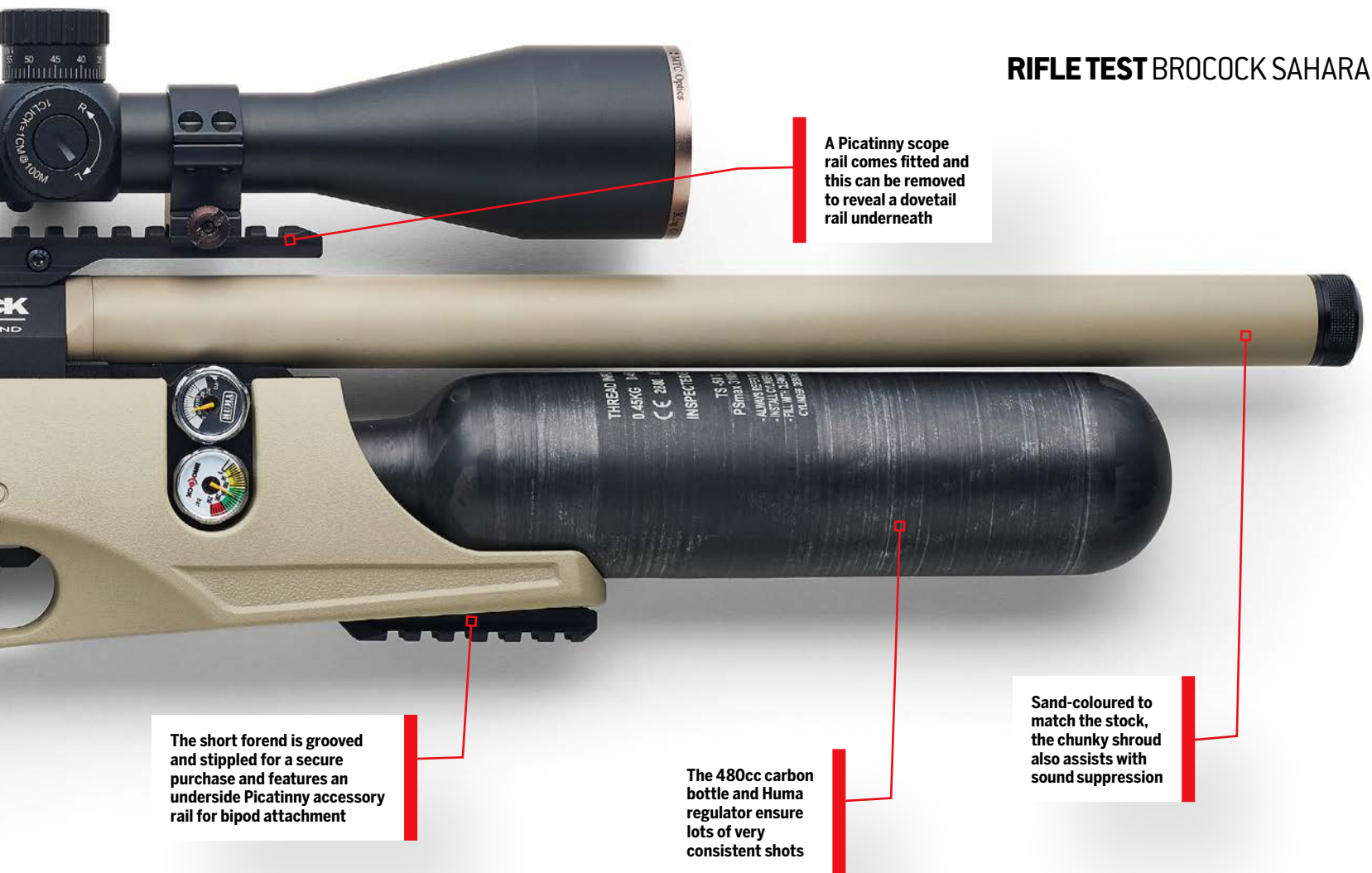
Length of pull is 375mm, and the ambidextrous stock incorporates a steep pistol grip, which is thoughtfully contoured and delivers good trigger attack. Behind that is a generous thumbhole cutaway with plenty of room for shooters with bigger hands. The pistol grip and forend are adorned with grooves and stippling, which further enhance the gun's aesthetics while making for a more secure hold.

Being able to tweak the fit of a stock can make a big difference when it comes to shooting comfortably and ensuring good alignment between your eye and sighting device. This stock offers height adjustment in both the cheekpiece and the butt pad so you can quickly and easily adapt it to fit you properly.

FEATURES AND FUNCTIONALITY

The Sahara XR is equipped with a high-quality 430mm German barrel that sits inside a chunky shroud, which looks very purposeful. While the shroud does help to hush the muzzle report, it didn't make the sub-12 ft-lb test gun whisper-quiet so I expect a lot of people will want to fit an additional silencer. The shroud is threaded to enable you to do just that, and 0dB makes a model to match the Sahara's colour scheme.

The distinctive colour of the stock and shroud works very well with the rest of the metalwork, which is anodised black to protect it from the elements. The Picatinny scope mounting rail featured here comes supplied and can be removed to expose a dovetail rail.



A Picatinny scope rail comes fitted and this can be removed to reveal a dovetail rail underneath

The short forend is grooved and stippled for a secure purchase and features an underside Picatinny accessory rail for bipod attachment

The 480cc carbon bottle and Huma regulator ensure lots of very consistent shots

Sand-coloured to match the stock, the chunky shroud also assists with sound suppression

One of my favourite things about this airgun's semi-bullpup design, apart from its compact proportions, is that the mounts don't sit as high as they do on most standard bullpups. That means you can mount the scope quite low to the barrel and it doesn't feel too top-heavy.

Although the Sahara comes supplied with a single-shot tray, you also get Brocock's new all-metal self-indexing magazine. This magazine holds 13 shots in .177, 11 in .22 and 10 in .25. It is very pellet-friendly and its gate-loading design makes it very easy to fill with pellets or slugs.

I have been using this magazine for quite some time in various Brocock airguns, and it is so simple to refill that I can now top it up with fiddly little .177 pellets by the light of a headlamp and while wearing gloves – it really is that simple to reload.

The supplied self-indexing magazine is driven by an extremely reliable sidelever mechanism, which is well positioned just above the pistol grip. The lever features a large dropdown handle that makes for a secure hold and very positive operation for all of your shots.



Although the shroud provides some sound suppression, it is threaded to accept an additional silencer to really hush the muzzle report

The result is a smooth, dependable mechanism that works like clockwork to cock and reload the Sahara very quickly and with minimal fuss.

This airgun has a match-quality two-stage trigger that I really like. Blade design is simple but effective with a subtle curve and wide, flat face that transmits plenty of feel to the pad of your index finger.

The blade can be adjusted for height and angle, and the first and second stage of the trigger mechanism are also adjustable.

“THE RESULT IS A SMOOTH, DEPENDABLE MECHANISM THAT WORKS LIKE CLOCKWORK”

The trigger on the review gun was set up extremely well straight from the factory, just as it should be. The first stage was short, coming to a clear stop before a crisp and positive second stage break with no creep.

I don't like having a safety catch positioned too close to the trigger, but I am getting used to the paddle-type switch just in front of the blade on Brocock's XR series.

The gun is safe when it's over to the right, and you simply need to flip it across to the left when you're ready to shoot.

High-power airguns are as popular as head-turning ones these days, and there are numerous output options for Sahara, including 46 ft-lb in .25 calibre and 30 ft-lb in .22.

Power can also be adjusted, either to suit different shooting scenarios or to optimise performance with different ammo. The power adjustment dial is positioned just in front of the sidelever and has three

clearly defined stops.

The Sahara is also equipped with a Huma regulator, which ensures its good air efficiency as

well as maintaining its good shot to shot consistency.

Consistency on the sub-12 ft-lb .177 I was sent for review was within five feet per second over a string of 10 shots. The regulator pressure is displayed on the top gauge on the right-hand side of the stock. And quite handily, the lower one shows you how much air you have left in the 480cc carbon bottle.



The Sahara runs Brocock's new all-metal self-indexing magazine, which is pellet-friendly and very easy to reload

Cocking and loading come courtesy of a very slick sidelever action which features an oversized lever for improved grip





Pressure in the Huma regulator is displayed on the top gauge, while the bottom one shows remaining air reserves

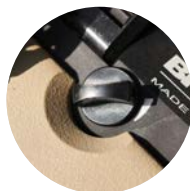
That bottle holds a lot of air and, thanks to the efficiency of the Huma regulator, sub-12 ft-lb models of the Sahara XR can return up to 460 shots from a 250 bar fill. When air reserves start to run low, simply remove the magnetic cap on the underside of the stock to expose the inlet ready to couple up with the supplied Foster connector.

PRECISION AND PERFORMANCE

I have shot the Sniper XR in its many different guises and all have been very accurate airguns. The Sahara may look a bit different, but it is exactly the same in that department.

Every component, from the trigger and regulator to the magazine and the barrel, has been carefully designed to do its job and to do it well, and the result is a very capable shooting machine.

Feed it the right ammo (likely a JSB variant like the Rangemaster Sovereigns I used for my test) and this airgun will put pellet on pellet at 30m. Ragged single-hole groups soon became an expectation at 40m, and the review gun could do the same at 50m as long as I did my bit.



Power can be adjusted to three different levels by turning the dial that sits just in front of the sidelever

The bulk of my accuracy testing was done from a bench, but the Sahara XR's versatile stock enabled me to shoot well from sitting and kneeling positions too. Unsupported standing shots have never been my forte, but I am sure that a more capable offhand shooter would also find it to be a strong performer from that stance too.

“EVERY COMPONENT HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO DO ITS JOB AND TO DO IT WELL”

The Sahara XR's compact proportions and consistent accuracy from a wide variety of shooting positions make it a good performer in the field too. I did have serious reservations about its light colour, which I expected to stand out like a sore thumb against the greens and browns of the British countryside, but I was surprised.

Having used it in woodland and open fields, I have to say that it was less conspicuous than I thought it would be. Of course, none of us really know for sure what our quarry actually sees, and the pigeons and rabbits I brought to book with the Sahara didn't seem particularly concerned by its colour scheme.

The Sahara XR is the latest in a long line of very good airguns from British gunmaker Brocock. It is tough, accurate, compact and reliable and, thanks to its new finish, now looks even more eye-catching than the rifles from which it has evolved. But this isn't just a gun that has been designed to be kind on the eye – it is a solidly constructed airgun that has been made to be shot on the range and in the field, and I am sure that anyone who ends up owning one will relish doing just that. ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

“The Sahara XR boasts a sand finish that makes it a head-turner, but there is more to it than its looks. This is a compact, versatile and accurate performer that has the precision and quality for range and field”