



Breda Zenith

A totally new over-and-under clay-buster from Breda has hit the UK market – and **the editor** likes it

The Zenith is the debut sporter from Breda, a gunmaker well known for its superbly engineered (if pricey) semi-autos. This new over-and-under has been designed from the ground up. It incorporates some of the Italian gunmaker's barrel-making technology, combined with tried and tested methods from other manufacturers, plus a host of innovative ideas.

In some ways, the Zenith redefines the over-and-under. It is a bold new design that builds on the progress made

over generations to produce something stunningly different and exciting. Designed primarily as a clay-buster, the Breda Zenith is packed with new features. These are not gimmicks but born from practicality. The company says it took almost two years from concept to a working prototype and that expert shooters were consulted every step of the way. I can believe that because the Zenith is a very well thought out shotgun.

Wear and tear

An example of this is the replaceable wearing parts. Many guns have replaceable parts, such as Beretta and Perazzi, but the Breda has taken this idea to the next level. Anything that wears can be replaced. Not only that, it can be replaced at home. For example, with little effort the ejectors can be removed and replaced. Even the small part



Note the modern design on the fore-end release

on the fore-end that regulates the tightness between the barrels and fore-end can be replaced when it wears. Part of the barrel lumps can be replaced by using an Allen key, which means after many years of shooting you can tighten up the gun on the fore-end. Other parts that tend to wear after much use are the trunnions and hinge pins. They are also interchangeable. Even the U-bolt, which helps lock the gun up, can be changed in no time when it wears. So what you get is a gun that can be easily and affordably rebuilt when necessary.

Trigger's broom

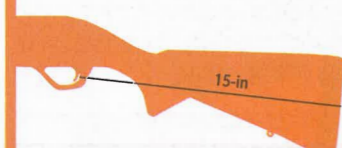
This aspect of the gun really appealed to me. The Zenith is designed as a clay-buster and will have thousands of cartridges put through it a year. To be able to rebuild the gun easily and increase its working life is a real bonus. You may think it would be a bit like Trigger's broom from the TV show *Only Fools and Horses*, in that once you had replaced everything little of the original



The bite on the barrel lumps can be replaced when worn

IN DETAIL

Price:	£2,400
Weight:	7½lb
Barrel:	30in and 32in (tested)
Stock:	Grade 3 with oiled stock as standard.
	A basic made to measure stock costs around £300 extra
Rib:	Ventilated 11mm tapered to 7mm



15-in

INFO

Available in 12-bore only • Low profile action • Extended multichokes • Adjustable trigger • 2¾in chambers



The Zenith is an ideal sporter at a good price

gun would be left, but what matters is that you would still have a serviceable gun. I was told that the price for the parts would be reasonable and the beauty is that you could fit them yourself if you are half competent.

Lock-up

The lock-up of this gun is solid and uses a conical U-shaped locking bolt with two pins that emerge from the face of the action and engage with bites on the breech when the gun is closed. The engineering of this part of the Breda is very much like that of a Beretta 690. Nothing wrong with that. The fore-end is also reminiscent of the Beretta 690 series

as well, but it has a geometric release that looks pleasingly modern.

A trigger plate action is reminiscent of many Italian guns but, like most of the gun, is made entirely by Breda. The only thing the company outsources is the blacking. Captive coil spring assemblies power the tumblers and it is an inertia driven action. A thing to remember about this type of action is that when new they may need a hefty shot load to ensure the gun cycles to the second barrel. Usually 28g loads or above are enough to ensure the gun cycles. Once worn in there should be no problems with using lighter loads.



Five extended multichokes are included with the gun

Easily replaceable parts • Long forcing cones • Imported by Viking Arms • vikingshoot.com

A nice touch is the adjustable trigger blade. Loosen a small grub screw with a hex key and you can move the trigger back and forth. The blade is spring-loaded so it moves by gradations along a rail, so when you want to set your trigger you can gauge it using the clicks. The trigger's weight of pull can be altered as well, but only by a gunsmith. To be honest, the trigger felt sweet to me, so I'd leave it alone.

The safety catch and barrel selector are on the top strap and move with a well-engineered positivity. I was testing a prototype gun and the barrel selector moved easily from side to side, however, on production guns the selector will incorporate a spring-loaded ball bearing to give it a more positive change. It is a manual safety, which is usual for most clay-busters.

Roll out the barrels

Moving to the barrels, we see they have long forcing cones (90mm). Breda uses this on its semi-autos to reduce perceived recoil. The barrels are finished with a set of extended chokes, which Breda claims gives an even pattern. Five chokes are included, which will give you ample choice. Interestingly, the barrels are a nominal bore (18.5mm) allowing the use of fibre-wad cartridges. The chamber is 2¾in and no 3in version is available. This simplifies production and, to be honest, most people



Recoil was well managed and the gun moved with ease onto the target

only use 3in cartridges on the foreshore and you wouldn't want to use a gun like this on the marsh. The barrels are proofed for steel and come in a choice of 30in or 32in.

Moving onto the aesthetics, the first thing that leaps out is the art deco engraving. The diagonal hatching on the black action (a silver version is available) was really striking and unlike anything I have seen before. Engraving on a clay gun is difficult to get right. Clays look like fried eggs and scrollwork looks out of place. Breda has got it right with this stunning and bold design.

The trigger is gold. I know a lot of readers won't like that but if you don't like the gold

wearing off you can always 'Scotch-Brite' it – or, when it does wear, a new trigger blade would freshen it up.

Good wood

All guns will have grade 4 oiled walnut, which isn't bad considering the modest price of the gun. The Zenith I tested had a nice bit of figuring but you could also see it had straight grain running through the neck, which would give this vulnerable area strength.

The stock has a full pistol grip and brings the finger to the trigger blade nicely. It has a nice palm swell (only right-hand stocks

ANDREW SYDENHAM



The Zenith is a strikingly different sporter



Up close

1. The U-bolt and trunnions and hinge pins are replaceable
2. Grade 4 wood comes as standard on all Zeniths



“If you like this gun, my advice would be to get in early while prices are relatively affordable”

are available) that really fills the hand. The stock felt rather chunky and if you are used to using Browning or a Miroku you will feel at home with this gun. A Schnabel tip fore-end is most appropriate for a sporter and it filled the hand nicely, giving good gun control. The grip areas are laser engraved and didn't feel too sharp on the hand.

The average stock will be around 14¾in length of pull, but can be adjusted by using a thicker or thinner butt pad. You must keep in mind that if you lengthen the stock your eye will come farther down the comb. However, for me the comb was quite high. If you pay £300 extra you can even have a basic custom-made stock.

This is a very good-looking gun. It has an understated and modern elegance to it and I really liked it.

On target

It may look stunning, but I was interested to see how the Zenith handled. I was curious as to why Breda had gone to so much effort to create a very low profile action and then married that to a chunky stock. I tried 28g cartridges first and missed a tricky crosser.

Many thanks to E J Churchill shooting ground for its help with this gun test. E J Churchill Shooting Ground, Park Lane, Lane End, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP14 3NS
Visit: ejchurchill.com or call 01494 883227 for more information

However, I was impressed by the lack of recoil. It was certainly a comfortable gun to shoot. I reloaded and had a go at the same target and dusted it.

The gun moved steadily and confidently. Great control was gained from the thick radius on the grip and the fore-end. This took off some of the twitchiness you can get with guns with a low profile action and a slender stock. I have known people who have hated a svelte Italian shotgun because it felt 'spindly' to them after guns with chunkier stocks. The only way I can describe the handling is that it is a cross between a low profile Italian shotgun and a Browning. Personally, I would have liked to experience the gun with a more slender grip to see whether you got that 'magic wand feel' of some guns.

You may think the gun would be heavy with that large stock and 32in barrels, but at around 7½lb it is lighter than most sporters. With the balance just around the hinge pin, the Zenith felt wonderfully light when in the shoulder. It moved with the target smoothly and felt right.

The trigger break was nice and crisp with a predictable let-off point. Even though the weight of pull could be adjusted by a gunsmith, I would leave it as it is.

Although the gun I was testing was a prototype it felt well put together and had been given a lot of use. I decided to try the 24g cartridges and it cycled those with ease.

The ejectors spat the cartridges out well clear of the gun and, unlike most Italian over-and-unders, the gape opened fully so it was easy to place a cartridge in the bottom barrel.

I really liked how well engineered the gun felt. Everything mechanical moved smoothly. The gun closed with such precision and ease it gave the impression of a well-made and expensive gun.

Competition

At £2,400 the Zenith will go head-to-head with giants like Beretta and Browning. Surely it doesn't stand a chance in that hotly contested price range for over-and-unders? Speaking to Andy Norris, UK sales manager at importer Viking Arms, he said: "Breda is a small company and it is not looking to take on the big boys. I worked for Browning for many years and it makes excellent guns and is one of the dominant gunmakers. Breda cannot compete with that. What Breda wants to do is offer a great gun at a great price for a shooter who wants something a little bit different. The features on this gun would probably cost £1.5k more from a bigger company."

The Breda Zenith is a bold move by the Italian maker. It felt like a gun worth more than its price point suggests. Andy from Viking said that the keen price was to encourage people to take a chance on the new gun and that the price may go up in the near future. If you like this gun, my advice would be to get in early while prices are relatively affordable. ■

EDITOR'S VERDICT

In the Zenith, Breda has created something that is refreshingly different. Some may not like the decoration on the action, or the chunky stock, but I'm sure no one will object to the easily replaceable wearing parts or the solid engineering. Moreover, the gun is comfortable to shoot and handles well. The price is competitive, so what is there not to like? Some shooters may prefer to stick to something more familiar but I would say dare to give this gun a chance.

SCORES ON THE DOORS

Build quality	23/25
Handling	23/25
Styling	25/25
Value for money	25/25

Total: 96/100