

# Mountain Bikes



## THE ANSWER

The question: Do you buy a mountain bike with big travel or less weight, stable angles or lively handling? Ellsworth's Epiphany eliminates the compromise, riding an inspired line between cross-country and downhill. You get a bike with five-plus inches of front and rear travel in a package that weighs just a few Allen bolts more than the company's venerated four-inch-travel Truth. During a long weekend in Moab, the Epiphany aced every trail I rode, from black-diamond slick-rock climbs to downhill chatterfests rough enough to put fear in the hearts of 4x4 off-roaders.

By Aaron Gulley



### STATE OF THE ART

Following the lead of the downhill industry, dual-density tires—which place softer rubber on the outside for better traction and harder rubber in the center for longer wear—are increasingly popular among cross-country riders. → Bikes with 29-inch wheels (see the Ventana El Capitán, next page) have been around for about five years but are just now making serious market inroads. Numerous manufacturers introduced 29ers this year, so you can finally test out the plush, momentum-carrying ride without breaking the bank. → Like 29ers, single-speed mountain bikes aren't new, but they are enjoying a surge in popularity. Once the domain of fitness freaks and tech-savvy bikeheads—with few complete bikes for sale until recently, half the fun was cobbling one together—single-speeds are now widely available as ride-ready factory bikes. Compared with their geared counterparts, they tend to be both lighter and less expensive.

**Ellsworth Epiphany (26.6 lbs, 19 in) \$5,400 [www.ellsworthbikes.com](http://www.ellsworthbikes.com)**

**1.** Ellsworth's elegant four-bar linkage, the benchmark for full-suspension bikes, ensures that all the power you put into your pedal stroke goes directly into moving you uphill—rather than getting lost in the flex of the shock and frame. So you expend less energy to go faster.

**2.** Shaped aluminum tubing makes for a light, snappy ride, and an asymmetrical chainstay adds rigidity to counterbalance the suspension. That means responsive comfort: The Epiphany kept me fresh during a one-day ride of Canyonlands' century-length White Rim Trail.

**3.** The Epiphany may have lots of travel, but it still climbs like a cross-country racer. The suspension keeps the rear wheel glued to the ground. Riding behind a friend on an Epiphany, I marveled that whenever he cleared deep ruts and foot-high steps, his rear tire never left the dirt.

**4.** With a longer wheelbase and slightly more relaxed geometry than the Truth, the Epiphany goes downhill like a Hummer. My first ride, I plunged down the boulder-strewn Shafer Trail, near Moab, with no regard for braking or choosing a line—and came out grinning maniacally.

**5.** Our Epiphany tipped the scale at an admirable 26.6 pounds with a sensible parts mix: a silky SRAM drivetrain, precise Magura Marta SL disc brakes, and a stable-platform Fox Talas X TrailTune fork. Without spending much more, you could easily trim this ride down to 24 pounds.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK WIENS