

315 PRODUCTS TESTED



Outside BUYER'S GUIDE

SUMMER 2010

KILLER DEALS!

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BIKE

Mountain

Plush Hardtail

Giant Xtc 29er 1 \$2,125

For years, carbon fiber and full suspension have been the driving forces in mountain-bike innovation. But the industry's recent embrace of big-wheeled rigs has breathed new life into aluminum frames and hardtail designs. "This bike reminded me that aluminum hardtails are incredible climbers," wrote one tester. "Extremely comfy for a hardtail," said another. Plus, cheaper materials and simpler designs mean more bang for the buck. Here, two grand buys a plush Fox RL fork to take a lot of the sting out of the trails, plus Shimano XT and SLX drivetrain components and Avid Juicy hydraulic brakes. 25.3 lbs (medium); giantbicycles.com

Climbing: 4.4

Descending: 3.8

Versatile and Burly

GT Sensor 1.0 \$3,000

We gave GT top honors in our 2005 Buyer's Guide, and the company's underrated proprietary "Independent Drivetrain" suspension continues to impress. The design has been refined over the years; it's lighter and more efficient. But the main benefit—isolating all suspension movement from pedaling forces—remains, as evidenced by the 5-inch-travel Sensor. "A surprise," wrote one tester.

2x10=The New MTB Math

SRAM's new XX mountain-bike component group is simpler, lighter, more efficient, and more comfortable than anything else we've ridden. We expect the basic premise—two chainrings in front and ten cogs in back (a 2x10 setup, as opposed to the standard 3x9)—to become an industry standard. Here's why: It's lighter; it allows for a narrower stance for better comfort; it keeps the chain in a straighter, more efficient line; and it eliminates the complexity of a three-position front derailleur. With the addition of a tenth cog in back, the 2x10 XX system also delivers almost exactly the same gear range—the difference between the highest and lowest gears—that a 3x9 does. XX started turning up on pro bikes late last season, and in March SRAM introduced the same 2x10 approach in its entry-level X7 group. —J.B.

"Reliable, fun, a great all-around bike." Though the reinforced aluminum frame and burly parts spec (Shimano XT and a peerless Fox Float 32 RL fork) add a bit of heft, "the good suspension makes up for it," said one tester. 28.4 lbs (medium); gtbicycles.com

Climbing: 3.7

Descending: 4.2

A Classic Reinvented

Ellsworth Glimpse

\$3,300

In an effort to lower the price of admission, Ellsworth offers up the Glimpse, its first-ever non-commuter bike not entirely made in the USA. The aluminum tubes are still produced here, but the shaping, welding, and assembly happen in Taiwan. (You probably wouldn't have known had we not told you.) Yes, the 5.25-inch-travel, aluminum-framed Glimpse is a bit heavy, but it's essentially a copy of the company's fantastic Epiphany trail bike, with the same patented suspension design—fully active with no pedal bob—as Ellsworth's most popular bikes. The house-brand wheels were also a hit, with a wide profile that put more tire in contact with the ground. 28.5 lbs (medium); ellsworthbikes.com

Climbing: 4.3

Descending: 4.4



How much travel do I need? For most people, five inches (like here on the Ellsworth and GT) is the sweet spot. These bikes are light and efficient enough for climbs but can also suck up some bigger hits and keep you comfortable for all-day trail epics. If you plan on racing a lot, or at least riding like you do, stick to four inches of travel or less. If your style is all about technical downhill and big drops, look for six inches or more.