

Conclusion

In the introduction, we said you shouldn't assume that bikes whose suspension designs look similar will perform alike. It would be equally misguided to say that all four-bar suspension designs are good while single-pivots are bad, when the reality is that there are good and bad examples of each.

So, even though the BMC, Giant and Mondraker all have twin-link suspension configurations, with Fox shocks and forks, the suspension response, pedal feedback, handling and weight distribution of each of the three bikes proved very different.

Of the bunch, the Mondraker Foxy R had the most balanced weight distribution but the suspension response lacked sensitivity, resulting in reduced grip, comfort and control. There was also noticeable interplay between pedal forces and the suspension, creating pedal feedback, especially in the small chainring.

By contrast, the Giant Reign 1 felt nose-heavy owing to its short front-end, making it harder to lift the anterior wheel. Even so, the Giant performed better and was more fun to ride than the Mondraker, as the rear suspension offered more grip and control. The Reign 1 is also nearly 1lb lighter than the Foxy and, more importantly, it's £200 cheaper — the extra cash would easily cover a wider bar, shock retune, winter tyres, and you'd still have change for new pedals.

Sizing on the Mondraker and Giant also played a massive part in the outcome of the test, but given the choice between a medium Mondraker Foxy R and a large Giant Reign 1, we'd go with the latter, and that's reflected in the ratings — even if there probably isn't a full point difference in the performance of both bikes.

So that just leaves the BMC Trailfox TF02. We hate to admit it, but the Trailfox was the last bike to come out of the van on our two-week European road trip. Why?

Well... let's be perfectly honest, it's not the prettiest-looking bike, is it? But we didn't let the BMC's quirky styling blinker our judgement. It didn't take long for the Trailfox to establish itself as the leader of the pack, rapidly becoming the bike we all wanted to ride. Playful in character, the Trailfox was balanced, poised and ready for action. The 150mm-travel APS rear suspension felt controlled and capable, while offering amazing grip. Best of all, the medium size bike is a perfect fit for the average-height rider. Needless to say, after establishing this, the Trailfox spent very little time in the back of the van.

The expression 'never judge a book by its cover' pretty much sums up the outcome of this test, particularly in relation to the Trailfox. We weren't the only ones judging the BMC on appearance, as nearly everyone we met seemed surprised to hear us singing the praises of the Trailfox over the colour-coded Mondraker Foxy R and sleek Giant Reign 1. And if you're struggling to put your own prejudice to one side, Evans Cycles, the exclusive UK distributor for BMC, has just reduced the price of the 2011 Trailfox TF02 by £400 to £2,199.99, to help you see it in a new light.

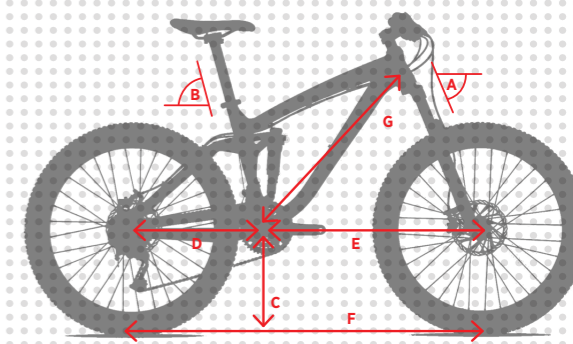
Never judge a book by its cover; our praise for the Trailfox surprised everyone



Trailfox: Best isn't always beautiful

SPECIFICATIONS & GEOMETRY

The devil's in the details: all the facts, figures and vital statistics for you to compare



	A HEAD ANGLE	B SEAT ANGLE	C BB HEIGHT	D CHAINSTAY	E FRONT CENTRE	F WHEELBASE	G DOWN TUBE
BMC	65.9°	73°	351mm	430mm	724mm	1,154mm	660mm
Giant	66.8°	69°	352mm	438mm	702mm	1,140mm	646mm
Mondraker	67.1°	71.7°	341mm	429mm	730mm	1,159mm	679mm

BMC TRAILFOX TF02 £2,599

GIANT REIGN 1 £2,400

MONDRAKER FOXY R £2,599

WEIGHT

13.1kg/28.8lb

12.9kg/28.4lb

13.4/29.5lb

CONTACT

evancycles.com

giant-bicycles.com

silverfish-uk.com

FRAME

SIZES

XS, S, M, L, XL

S(16in), M(18in), L(20in)

M, L, XL

SIZE TESTED

M

M(18in)

L

FRAME MATERIAL

Triple-buttressed aluminium

Aluxx SL aluminium

Stealth 6061 T6 alloy

SUSPENSION FORK

Fox 32 Talas RL QR15

Fox 32 Float RL QR15

Fox 32 Float RL QR15

REAR SHOCK

Fox Float RP2 XV

Fox Float RP2 XV

Fox Float RP2 Boost Valve

FRONT TRAVEL

120-150mm

150mm

140mm

REAR TRAVEL

150mm

152mm

140mm

WHEELS

HUBS

Easton Vice 15mm F/142mm R

Giant Tracker/Shimano M525

Onoff Disc 15mm F/135mm R

RIMS

Easton Vice

DT Swiss E540

Dt Swiss X430

SPOKES

Stainless

Stainless

Stainless

TYRES

Schwalbe Nobby Nic 2.24in

Kenda Nevegal 2.35in Stick-E

WTB Wolverine 2.2in

GROUPSET

SHIFTERS

Shimano SLX 10-speed

Shimano SLX 10-speed

SRAM X7 9-speed

FRONT MECH

Shimano XT

Shimano SLX

Shimano SLX DM

REAR MECH

Shimano XT

Shimano SLX Shadow

SRAM X9

CRANK

Shimano 552

Shimano SLX Dyna-Sys

SRAM X7 42/28t

BOTTOM BRACKET

Shimano

Shimano

SRAM GXP

BRAKES

Avid Elixir 5

Avid Elixir 5

Avid Elixir 3

ROTOR SIZES

185/185mm

185/160mm

185/185mm

COMPONENTS

SADDLE

Scor

Fizik Gobi XM

Fizik Gobi XM

SEATPOST

Scor MKII

Giant Connect SL

Race Face Evolve 31.6mm

HANDLEBAR

Scor MKII 680mm

Giant Connect SL 670mm

Race Face Evolve 680mm

STEM

Scor MKII 70mm

Giant Connect SL 70mm

M Decline 80mm

RATING



Range FINDER

Check out our test bikes' stablemates

BMC Trailfox TF01 £3,849

evancycles.com

Jumping up to the flagship Trailfox TF01 brings a £1,250 price hike and a raft of upgrades: FIT damping in the Fox Talas fork, SRAM 2x10 XO groupset, Easton Haven wheels and matching Easton bar and stem. All in, the higher-spec components save 2lb (0.9kg) in weight, making the Trailfox 01 a 26lb (11.8kg), 150mm-travel shredder. Still not light enough? Then check out the 2012 BMC Trailfox Carbon TF01.



Giant Reign 0 £3,645

giant-bicycles.com

The only way is up for Giant's longer-travel trail bike, and the black/neon green finish makes the Reign 0 one of the best-looking bikes in the Giant range. Key upgrades over the Reign 1 include a more-adjustable RP23 rear shock and FIT-damped Fox Talas 120-150mm fork. You also get a full Shimano XT transmission and a Crank Brothers Joplin 4R height-adjustable seatpost.



Mondraker Foxy £2,199

silverfish-uk.com

The entry-level Foxy shares the same frame and Zero suspension design with the more expensive R and RR, but gets a basic RockShox Ario RL rear shock and Fox Alps RL fork. Avid Juicy 3s replace the Elixir brakes but you still get 185mm rotors. The other big difference is that the Foxy has a more traditional 3x10 SRAM drivetrain, while the two top-tier bikes run 2x10.

