

01

The shape of the mech hanger makes it hard work to get the rear wheel in or out despite the cupped design of the 142mm dropouts

02

With 180mm Post Mount Direct the smallest rear rotor that can be fitted to the Trailfox is 180mm

03

Cable routing along the underside of the down tube. The rear mech housing runs inside the chainstay to stop it getting chewed-up

04

The recently steepened 73° seat angle improves the riding position when it's time to climb

BMC Trailfox TF02 £2,599.99



Based in the Jura mountains, Switzerland, BMC is perfectly situated for developing and testing suspension bikes, so we were keen to find out if there's more to the Trailfox than initially meets the eye.

Frame

With triple-butted tubing, a tapered head tube and a massively oversized down tube, the front triangle of the Trailfox ticks all the correct boxes. But BMC isn't simply following fashion, as the Integrated Skeleton Concept — which sees the seat tube braced to the underside of the top tube — flips conventional styling on its head in favour of improved strength.

Moving rearward, the Trailfox sports 142x12mm Maxle dropouts but out on the trail the back end of the BMC doesn't feel as stiff as the standard quick-release rear ends found on the Mondraker or Giant. Obviously there's no flex in the welded one-piece rocker link, so it is probably due to the rear triangle only being braced vertically on the non-drive side.

Suspension

Setting up the 150mm-travel Advanced Pivot System (APS) suspension on the Trailfox is a task made easier by the Lapierre-esque sag indicator on the rocker link — which BMC calls the 'initial load indicator'. All pivots use cartridge bearings and the Trailfox gets a medium compression and rebound-tune RP2 shock.

Up front, the Talas II adjuster on the open-bath Fox fork lets you drop the travel from 150mm to 120mm for climbing. And, given the relatively slack 65.9° head angle,

it comes in useful for those arduous fire road climbs.

Wheels

There is no denying that Schwalbe's Nobby Nic tyres are lightweight and fast-rolling, but they puncture easily and stop you getting your knee down in corners. Thankfully the Easton Vice wheels, shod with our Maxxis control tyres, were every bit the match for the BMC's big-mountain attitude. Fast freehub engagement, good spoke tension and overall stiffness, combined with a sensible rim width, make the Easton Vice a formidable wheelset. They are also the lightest wheels in test.

Groupset

When the rear mech cable outer exploded just above the rear mech and before entering the chainstay, the BMC's 30-speed Shimano transmission was reduced to three usable gears. Much to our surprise, and relief, the new outer casing threaded easily through the chainstay.

But the weakest link in the Trailfox's transmission is the cheap looking, non-hollow-forged chainset — the crank arms don't offer anything like the same stiffness-to-weight ratio as the SLX cranks on the Giant.

Components

With its 70mm stem, the BMC is halfway home. Add a wider bar with a bit less back-sweep and the cockpit would be dialled.

Performance

Once we'd swapped the bar, stem, tyres and grips for our chosen control parts, the

BMC instantly felt like a good bike. The riding position on the medium size was excellent and the controlled, neutral nature of the APS rear suspension had us instantly up to speed. Grip under braking is truly impressive and if you are coming from a more traditional XC trail bike the quality suspension, balanced riding position and slack head angle will have you brimming with confidence on every descent. Granted, the slacker head angle feels more unruly on the climbs, but it's a compromise that we're more than happy with given that the Trailfox has 150mm of very capable travel. Also using the ProPedal and Talas adjusters, in combination or independently, really aids climbing efficiency.

Verdict

BMC has got the fundamentals covered with the Trailfox TF02: fit, geometry, suspension and braking are all dialled. The bike pedals efficiently in the middle ring and BMC just needs to work on the finishing touches for this bike to be considered a great package.

It is the standout bike here but the Trailfox faces stiff competition from the Lapierre Zesty 514, which is £200 more but gets a much higher spec, including a FIT-damped Fox fork. We rated the Zesty 9 out of 10 in our Ultimate Trail Bikes test, leaving us no choice but to give the Trailfox TF02 an 8, even if it deserves a slightly higher score.



We Love
The devil may care attitude of the Trailfox

We Hate
Not having an 8.5 rating

SPECIFICATION

Frame: Triple-butted aluminium
Fork: Fox 32 Talas RL QR15
Groupset: 110-speed Shimano SLX/XT
Chainset: Shimano 552
Brakes: Avid Elixir 5, 185mm rotors
Wheels: Eastern Vice/Schwalbe Nobby Nic 2.24in
Contact: www.bmcswitzerland.com

ANGLE FINDER

Size tested: M
Head angle: 65.9°
Seat angle: 73°
BB height: 351mm
Chainstay: 430mm
Front centre: 724mm
Wheelbase: 1154mm
Down tube: 660mm

Far left: Unique styling includes T-profiled top tube

Left: APS suspension features sag indicator on the rocker link

Right: Internal cabling protects from chain slap

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 chattering.

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.

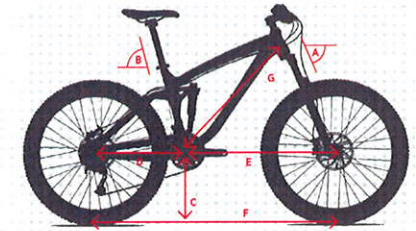
Never judge a book by its cover; our praise for the Trailfox surprised everyone



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	B	C	D	E	F	G
	HEAD ANGLE	SEAT ANGLE	BB HEIGHT	CHAINSTAY	FRONT CENTRE	WHEELBASE	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	evanscycles.com	giant-bicycles.com	silverfish-uk.com
FRAME			
SIZES	XS, S, M, L, XL	S(18in), M(18in), L(20in)	M, L, XL
SIZE TESTED	M	M(18in)	L
FRAME MATERIAL	Triple-butted 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 HS25	Onoff Disc 15mm F/ 135mm R
RIMS	Easton Vice	DT Swiss E5 40	DT Swiss X430
SPOKES	Stainless	Stainless	Stainless
TYRES	Schwalbe Nobby Nic 2.24in	Kenda Nevegal 2.35in Stick-E	WTB Wolverine 2.2in

	BMC TRAILFOX TF02	GIANT REIGN 1	MONDRAKER FOXY R
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

	BMC TRAILFOX TF02	GIANT REIGN 1	MONDRAKER FOXY R
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

	BMC TRAILFOX TF02	GIANT REIGN 1	MONDRAKER FOXY R
RATING	8	7	6



Check out our test bikes' stablemates

BMC Trailfox TF01 £3,849

evanscycles.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.