

## ORANGE P7 S £1,053.95

Common to the rest of the industry, Orange bikes have seen a fair old price hike for 2009 and we had to downshift to the cheaper P7 S model (with upgrades) from last year's Pro model to meet our price point. An optional upgrade to add a Fox Vanilla fork up front is a good value compromise in our view.

### Frame

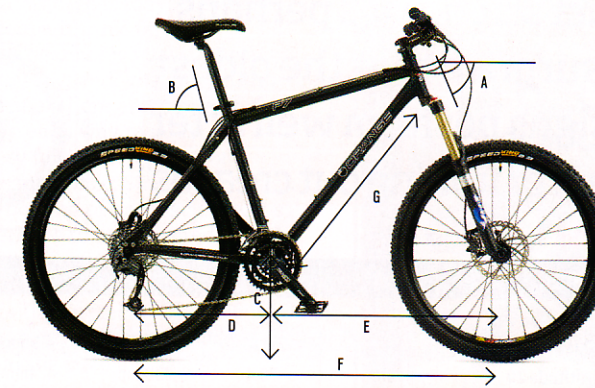
Now in its umpteenth year, the P7 is a proven workhorse with a reliable track record and has benefitted from plenty of refinements over time to get to where it is today. Optimised for a 130/140mm fork, the P7 is geared around a little more travel than some others here. The frame remains unchanged from last year — cold-drawn double-butted and shaped tubing, with an ovalised toptube. Wishbone stays offer good mud clearance. The frame's lines are perhaps a little spoiled by bosses and brackets for every guard, rack and attachment possible, as well as a cable routing that travels along the top tube. We'd prefer it underneath and out of the way, but Orange claims there's plenty demand for this stuff.

The sliding aluminium rear dropouts offer a singlespeed option, as well as the possibility to lengthen the wheelbase by around 12mm. We found this extra length beneficial to shift rider weight forward a tad. The forward-facing seatpost slot still comes with a shimmed post and this offers good comfort for a long day in the saddle.

As a side note, the frame we tested measured up to the exact dimensions and angles of last year's frame — this can only bode well for Orange's quality control.

### Fork

As stated, we upgraded to the Fox Vanilla R fork. While being marginally heavier than its air



### ANGLE FINDER

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Head angle	Seat angle	BB height	Chainstay	Front centre	Wheelbase	Downtube
67.7°	71.1°	313mm	432mm	666mm	1090mm	666mm

sprung competitors, it barely matters when performance is this good. The fork is pretty basic in terms of adjustment options (rebound and preload) but works great from the off, and should prove durable and reliable. No knob twiddling, no pumping it up or down and with a compression damping action that just delivers confidence and control wherever you are riding. Grip and support is simply leagues ahead on this fork and we highly recommend it as the best choice for these kinds of hardtails.

### Components

Sorted components are all over the P7 — good bars, short stem, Mavic rims. With prices being hiked across the board on complete bikes, and

presumably on OEM prices to manufacturers, it seems like more Shimano gear is being specced down the ranges for whatever reason. It's good news for riders as the Deore and SLX stuff we used all over the test looks and works great. The Orange comes with Avid's excellent Juicy 3 stoppers and Deore gearing throughout, together with a solid Truvativ drivetrain.

### Performance

The Orange P7 felt exactly as it did on test last year — stable, balanced and fun. As the heaviest on test and with among the slackest angles, logic would tell us that the Orange will struggle in the nimble stakes against other tighter and lighter competition in this test. It doesn't and logic doesn't stack up in this case. It feels the fastest because it offers the best-balanced riding position, easily the most traction and only loses out to the On-One in pure comfort terms for a long day in the saddle.

With the Fox Vanilla fork it carries an almost unfair performance advantage. Pair this with the sorted geometry and layout and it makes for a fun and planted ride every time. The P7 dishes out confidence in spades, and is the easiest match to someone swapping over from an all mountain or trail bike — this bike rides the most like your longer travel ride of the four here. We feel this gives confidence and performance whether or not you ride full sussers — a good bike is a good bike.

### NEED TO KNOW

**FRAME:** Steel (cro-mo)

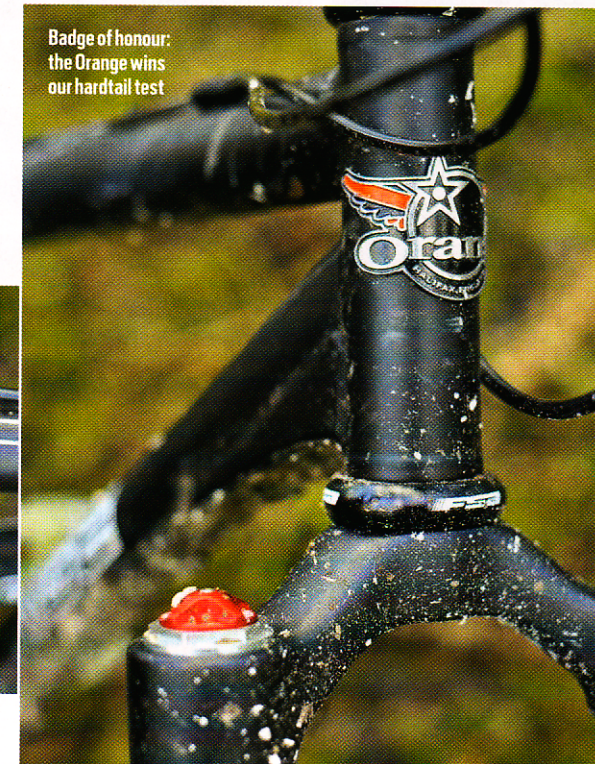
**FORK:** Fox Vanilla 32 R

**SIZES:** 15, 17, 19, 21

**WEIGHT:** 13.4kg (29.5lb)

**CONTACT:** [www.orangebikes.co.uk](http://www.orangebikes.co.uk)

Badge of honour: the Orange wins our hardtail test



### Verdict

Best hardtail on test again here for the Orange. It might not be the most glamorous bike ever made, but it is fast becoming a classic in terms of sheer balance and rideability. You can go anywhere and do anything on it with confidence and it offers precise feeling yet safe handling. That's the objective for these bikes at the end of the day, and the Orange was simply more fun to ride. The well thought-out P7 doesn't need any kit changes straight out of the box and it rides lighter than it weighs.

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Toptube cable routing spoils the clean lines