

Bike Test

TRAIL HARDTAILS
£1,050-£1,300

DROPPING IN

The Crush is ripe for a dropper, and internal cable routing makes upgrading to a 'stealth' post easy

MORE IS MORE

The Revelation series up 140mm of plush, accurate travel – a lot for a hardtail, but it suits the Crush

RINGING THE CHANGES

We like the double-and-bash crankset, but the ISCG tabs mean you can add a chain guide for extra security if you prefer to run a single ring up front

ORANGE CRUSH AM

£1,300

Budget all-mountain bruiser from stalwart UK trail meisters

SO GOOD

Light enough to ride all day but tough enough to throw around

Great handling and a good blend of sensible components with no glaring flaws

NO GOOD

Low BB height means crank strikes are possible over rough terrain

Steep seat angle makes slippery seated climbs a tad trickier



JARGON BUSTER

Double and bash
Crankset with twin chainrings and an outer bash plate to protect the largest ring from damage on trail obstacles.

Orange's hard-hitting Crush hardtail has been through various incarnations over the years. After an early outing as an uncompromising headbanger with big fork and monocoque frame construction, it's settled down to its current position in the Orange range – an all-mountain all-rounder, light enough to ride all day but tough enough to take a bit of abuse in its stride. The AM is the baby of the range. Is it worth the asking price?

The frame

The Crush's refreshing lack of shapeshifting tubes means it oozes a retro, no-nonsense appeal. Actually, that's not entirely fair – the down tube shifts slightly in cross section, from square-ish up by the massive head tube to oval-ish at the bottom bracket. But the rest of it is pure, unadulterated round or rectangular tubing, none of which appears to have been anywhere near a hydroforming machine.

That down tube forms a backbone that's plenty stiff enough to hang everything else off, reinforced by a chunky gusset up front to help keep the head tube where it ought to be in case of a hard frontal impact. The

steeply sloping top tube almost – but not quite – forms an uninterrupted line into the fastback stays, which are welded ahead of the seat tube in order to improve tyre clearance. Square section chainstays help keep the rear wheel tracking true. Cables run neatly below the top tube, and there's provision to route the cable for a 'stealth' dropper post internally. ISCG mounts and a single set of bottle cage bosses complete the detail.

Plugged into the front is a RockShox Revelation RL Solo Air fork with 140mm (5.5in) of travel. It's a solid mid-range performer that'll keep most riders happy, combining enough travel to keep even the hardest riding of trail tamers rubber side down with plenty of steering precision.

The frame

Other price-equivalent hardtails manage to shoehorn a smattering of XT components into the spec list. The Crush AM's SLX and Deore kit doesn't have the same kudos, but it doesn't sacrifice anything in performance terms. And the double-and-bash crankset is the perfect set-up for a hard riding trail machine like this, giving a good spread of gears

and massive amounts of ground clearance. It's good to see Orange didn't forget to fit a 180mm rotor up front too, for more consistent braking on long descents.

The ride

Orange have created a bike with a slightly unusual mix of slack head and steep seat angles. The relaxed front end and long wheelbase hint at big-hitting high-speed stability, while the weight-forward stance created by the steep seat tube and inline post are straight out of the cross-country race bike cookbook. But here's the thing – it works.

Pushing the rider's weight forward makes for an efficient pedalling position for getting the power down, and this is emphasised further by the wide bar, which shifts body weight even further towards the centre of the bike. A roomy top tube means there's plenty of room for this in spite of the stubby stem, giving plenty of scope for shifting weight backwards and forwards as trail conditions dictate.

The Crush's compact frame structure translates into instant get up and go. It's no featherweight, but much of the extra heft over more



THE CRUSH DEVOURS CHOPPY, ROCKY SECTIONS OF TRAIL AS THOUGH THEY'RE NOT THERE

cross-country biased trail bikes is in the fork – and it's the fork that's the Crush's secret weapon. Ride with your weight forward, hovering over the saddle, and the Revelation's accurate steering and implacable rock-swallowing ability allow the Crush to devour choppy, rocky sections of trail as though they're not there. The rigid rear end keeps up a constant chatter of trail feedback at slow to middling speeds without

ever becoming harsh, but at high speeds it simply tracks accurately in the fork's wake.

We've just two minor niggles. First, the bottom bracket is low enough that we gouged the pedals on rocks occasionally. And second, steep and slippery climbs need some judicious rearward weight transfer to keep the rear wheel dug in, thanks to the steep seat position. But these are minor grumbles. While it lacks the all-out

pace and grace of lighter trail machines, the Crush AM adds a great dollop of can-do fun to any trail ride. If you like to ride big, fast and hard, the Orange should certainly be added to your shortlist. »

MBUK

Orange's trail-taming bruiser proves that a hardtail can handle seriously rough lines with ease





**MBUK
WINNER**
**ORANGE
CRUSH AM**



FINAL VERDICT

With such a choice of frame materials, wheel sizes and fork travel, it can be hard to know what's going to work best. We like the Pinnacle Ramin Five for daring to be different, combining big wheels with a 120mm fork and geometry that's more trail than race. It's a good bike but the heavy wheels blunt the fun factor, and that's a shame.

Vitus's Sentier VRS doesn't have a weight problem. It's also well specced, a great price and handles really well, with enough

fork travel to keep even the most adventurous rider happy. The Genesis Latitude 20 has a bit less travel and isn't quite such great value, but combines ride-by-wire handling with the lively feel only a steel frame can provide. Both are good bikes, but both would be better still with a better fork.

And that, ultimately, is why the Orange Crush AM is the pick of the bunch. Yes, it's the most expensive, but the kit is good, the ride sublime and the fork just keeps on going, whatever you throw in its path. ⚙️

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