

**TESTED** Entry-level full-sussers



**KHS XCT 555**  
**£1,199**



# KHS XCT 555 £1,199

In common with the Diamondback, the KHS is geared towards trail riding, rather than the more playful orientation of the Carrera. The bike sports a neat looking low-slung rear triangle and 140mm-travel front and rear, and is also comfortably the lightest bike on test, clocking in at 31.8lb. While this version is £100 or so more pricey than other bikes here, KHS also offers this frame in a less well-dressed package for under a grand.

## Frame and parts

The AL6061 frame offers 5.5in of travel through its compact, Horst link design. The frame also sports reinforced gussets at the head tube and a seat tube bridge assembly. The parts package is solid and well thought-out, and highlights include Mavic X317 rims, a Truvativ Firex chainset, as well as SRAM X7 & X9 shifting and gears. Unusually, the KHS even comes complete with Shimano clipless pedals. Bonus. We did however have some issues with the wet weather pad performance of the Hayes Stroker Ryde brakes. Our common gripe of an overlong stem and daft-shaped bars didn't apply, as both were sorted on the KHS.

## Suspension

A Marzocchi 44 TST 140mm fork with stiff 15mm axle matched the 140mm dished out by the RockShox Monarch 3.1 Solo Air shock on the rear. Adjustment options are preload, compression and rebound on the fork and rebound adjustment as well as an effective compression floodgate dial on the air shock. The QR axle felt stiff and is a major improvement on the previous design.

## Performance

The KHS handles and rides well. Rider position and overall layout is neutral.



### ANGLE FINDER

Head angle	Seat angle	BB height	Chainstay	Front centre	Wheelbase	Downtube
68.7°	72.7°	343mm	425mm	680mm	1108mm	648mm

As soon as you get on the bike the position just feels sorted — there are no nasty surprises out on the trail. It felt the most nimble and competent bike here by a wide margin. We all appreciated the frame and fork stiffness, and this meant the bike was pretty efficient in transferring pedal input to the ground, whether cranking along the flat or grinding steep climbs. Geometry-wise, we had no complaints at all.

The Marzocchi fork worked fine, but offered less traction, control and support than the 55 on the Carrera. It was difficult to achieve a compromise between keeping the fork from diving and retaining suppleness over the bumps. Also, halfway through the test on the “race your mates” feature last month, the fork developed a knocking sound on top-out which we

### NEED TO KNOW

**FRAME:** 6061 aluminium, RockShox Monarch 3.1, 140mm

**FORK:** Marzocchi 44ATA 140mm

**SIZES:** M, L

**WEIGHT:** 14.4kg (31.83lb)

**CONTACT:** www.khsbikes.co.uk

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couldn't get to the bottom of.

Out back, we know from experience the Monarch 3.1 shock can be very plush in the right configuration, but we didn't feel that the suspension was as supple as it might be on this bike. The suspension initially moved well into the travel but there seemed to be a ramp-up later in the stroke, giving the illusion of less than the advertised amount of travel. This keeps the bike tight and lean feeling, and helps momentum (it seems to sit on top of roots and ruts), but ultimately the KHS didn't offer the pure speed and traction of some 140mm bikes like the Orange 5 or the Cannondale Prophet, for example. The KHS still proved confident enough, but fell short of the descending prowess of some other bikes in its class.

Intermittent knocking on the Marzocchi



Monarch shock one of our faves



## Verdict

The KHS XCT 555 offers the best in test performance here. It handles well, the rider position is neutral and balanced, and the overall package is excellent value and well thought out, as well as being useable for a lot of riders. Some other bikes in this price range still offer better suspension performance, but the KHS is close enough to the best in its class to be a contender. A slightly improved suspension performance, alongside its already stiff design and solid components package, could turn the KHS into one of the best bikes available in this price range.

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