



Grouptest

All-round MTB tyres

Tyres for trail centres aren't the best option for traditional all-terrain exploring. **Guy Kesteven** reviews rubber for longer off-road rides



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As well as being a prolific bike tester, Guy has created route guides and videos for Cycling UK. His own YouTube channel is GuyKesTV

If you've tried buying mountain bike tyres recently you'll have been confronted with a bewildering range of off-road rubber options. You'll probably have noticed that a lot of old favourite 'trail all-rounders' have got a lot bigger, heavier and stickier, too. This is great if you're bombing down bike park trails after being driven up in a van. It's not so great if you ride bridleways, woods and moorland under your own steam. For this test I've also avoided super-light XC race tyres that are little more than inner tubes with treads, because you'd probably prefer to spend more time riding than fixing punctures.

Instead I've worked through all the major tyre brands – and some more obscure ones – to narrow down a 'best buy' selection for more traditional mountain biking. By that I mean rubber that mixes reasonable weight and easy rolling with trustworthy traction in all conditions and enough strength to keep you safe if it's rocky or you're carrying bikepacking gear. And while I've mostly concentrated on tyres suitable for self-propelled adventures I've included recommendations for e-MTB use where applicable.

Details

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Width

Few mountain bike tyres measure up as wide as the size printed on the sidewall. I've listed the actual widths at 20psi on a 30mm internal rim. Note that while MTB tyre manufacturers prefer inches for sizing, Cycle uses ISO designations (see cyclinguk.org/tyresizes).

2 Tread

I've picked tyres with intermediate tread that will work cleanly and consistently in most conditions but roll quietly and smoothly on harder surfaces. If there's one thing you learn testing hundreds of tyres, though, it's that tread is only a small part of the performance equation.

3 Compound

Harder rubber rolls faster and lasts longer but doesn't grip as well as soft and sticky mixes. The tyres here cover

a range of compounds but some of these tyres have different options available in the same design; see the manufacturer websites for details.

4 Casing

How the fabric body of the tyre is woven, overlapped and reinforced for wear or puncture proofing makes a far bigger difference than most people realise. Not just in terms of weight and survivability, but also in how the tyre rolls and how it feels.

5 Price

To keep all pockets happy our tyre selection spans a wide range of retail prices. It's worth shopping around as, like most of the bike world right now, there are some great deals out there.



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