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Verdict

Choosing a mountain bike tyre will always involve compromises between grip, toughness, rolling speed and low weight. In terms of compliant, confident grip with a lively feel and decent roll, the Forecaster is a tyre you can really have fun with. While it's gained weight and lost some speed, the Nobby Nic is still an efficient yet trustworthy, fit-and-forget all-rounder. Vittoria's Mezcaval is the lightest and most fragile here, but even in XC terms it's hyper fast, not just physically but psychologically due to its bright, high-energy feel. As soon as you throw price into the equation, Specialized's tyres are in a different league, without suffering from obviously downgraded performance either.



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1 Specialized Ground Control Grid T7

£18.50 specialized.com

SPECIALIZED HAS BEEN making a Ground Control tyre for over 30 years, but its latest is the best yet and fantastic value. Nominally £37.50, it's currently half that. The mixed tread grips consistently on most trails from wet and sloppy to dry and loose so it steers, drives and brakes with predictable results year round. Despite decent gaps for fast clearing it doesn't growl too much on the road. S-Works and Control carcass options are super-light (around 700g) and fragile as a result but the Grid XC version is tough enough to ride rocks without regrets. Sizes: 60-584 [27.5x2.35], 60-622 [29x2.35, tested]. Actual width: 59mm. Weight: 855g.

Reliable grip and reasonable rolling speed at a bargain price

2 Maxxis Forecaster MaxTerra Exo

£64.99 maxxis.com/uk

THE LATEST MAXXIS Forecaster is heavier and a little slower than the previous generation but pays that back with excellent all-round control. More substantial shoulder tread makes it a tyre you can take braking and cornering liberties with in all conditions, from muddy woods to hard-baked fire roads or rocky trails. It rolls and accelerates noticeably better than Maxxis trail tyres like the DHF and DHR. The Exo carcass is an excellent blend of supple compliance, decent strength and bearable weight for most purposes. Note that it blows up quite narrow. Sizes: 60-622 [29x2.4, tested], 65-622 [29x2.6]. Actual width: 56mm. Weight: 920g.

An all-rounder tyre that more technical trail riders will enjoy

3 Schwalbe Nobby Nic Super Trail Addix SpeedGrip

£64.99 schwalbe.com/en

SCHWALBE'S NOBBY NIC has long been a grippy-looking but surprisingly fast – if slippery – all-rounder. The latest update looks less 'Nobby' but actually grips a lot more reassuringly off road. It still rolls faster than it looks, too, especially if you choose the aptly named Addix SpeedGrip version. You will lose some wet weather grip as a result though. Super Trail refers to the carcass, which has extra reinforcement and support that loaded riders and e-bikers will appreciate. Sizes: 57-559, 62-559, 57-584, 62-584, 65-584, 70-584, 57-622, 62-622 [tested], 65-622. Actual width: 61mm. Weight: 1,094g.

Fast-rolling, do-it-all tyre with improved off-road traction

4 Vittoria Mezcaval XC Race Formulation

£64.99 vittoria.com

VITTORIA'S MEZCAVAL WAS already a firm favourite with high-speed bikepackers and distance record setters, and now there's a new Race Formulation version made from a fresh silica and graphene compound. The carcass is also a new 60tpi weave in a bigger '2.4in' size. The new carcass is still slippery, especially in wet woodland or rock conditions, and the round shape means less shoulder bite. If you can tame it on technical terrain, however, the Mezcaval flies in terms of rolling speed. The tread lasts well, although puncture and damage resistance isn't prioritised. Sizes: 60-622 [29x2.4, tested]. Actual width: 59mm. Weight: 760g.

Quick-rolling XC tyre for those wanting to travel light and fast