

# MBUK BIKE OF THE YEAR TRAIL

## SPEC

**Frame** 'Series 3'  
6061 aluminium  
alloy, 130mm  
travel

**Sizes** S, M, L\*, XL  
(asterisk indicates  
size tested)

**Fork** Marzocchi  
Bomber Z1,  
140mm travel

**Shock** Fox Float X  
Performance  
EVOL (custom  
tune)

**Wheelset** Marin  
double-wall rims  
on forged alloy  
hubs, Maxxis  
Assegai 3C  
MaxxTerra EXO  
27.5x2.5in tyres

**Drivetrain**  
Shimano Deore  
XT/SLX with FSA  
Grid cranks and  
SunRace cassette  
(1x12)

**Brakes** TRP Slate  
Evo, 203mm/  
180mm rotors

**Bar/stem** Marin,  
780mm/Marin,  
35mm

**Seatpost/saddle**  
TranzX YSP23JL  
dropper/Marin

**Weight** 15.33kg,  
large size  
without pedals  
[www.marinbikes.com](http://www.marinbikes.com)

## MARIN RIFT ZONE 27.5" XR £3,095

**Marin claim this** is their most fun trail bike – XR purportedly stands for Extra Rad! – and during testing this assertion held true. While smooth-rolling 29in wheels tend to dominate the trail bike scene, the smaller, more manoeuvrable 650b hoops on this 27.5" model (a 29er version is available for the same price) held their own.

The US brand use a single-pivot swingarm and linkage-actuated shock to dole out 130mm of rear-wheel travel, controlled, impressively, by a Fox Float X shock. This is paired with a smooth, rock-solid, 140mm-travel Marzocchi Z1 fork up front – a combination which gives the Rift Zone some of the most sorted-feeling suspension in this test. The fork feels unflappable, while the rear suspension blends early-stroke sensitivity with late-stroke control, even under braking, allowing you to generate as much grip as the

dry-weather-preferring, MaxxTerra-compound Maxxis tyres allow.

Those small wheels really aid the bike's agility, making it super-easy to thread a tight line through rocks, kick the back end out or lift the front wheel up, so it's a hoot to ride. Through long, fast corners or high-frequency chunder, it's noticeable that the smaller wheels don't have the same planted feel as bigger hoops, though. The ride is a touch more staccato and speed is marginally harder to hold. We found ourselves needing to make more micro-adjustments to keep the bike on the straight and narrow. So, if raw speed is your goal, you're probably best off looking at the 29er version.

On climbs, we regularly reached for the shock's lockout lever, as there's some pedal bob from the back end. Grip was good on loose surfaces, even mud, thanks to the

supple suspension. The bike feels more cramped than most, though, with its steep 77-degree seat tube angle and short 611mm top tube leaving our knees feeling closer to the bar than on other bikes here.

We were really impressed with the frame's finish, including super-tidy cable runs. When it comes to the kit Marin have specced, for the money, we have little to complain about. The single-ply, firm-compound tyres ping off rocks and aren't that puncture-resistant, but the tread pattern works well in dry conditions. While the basic brakes lack the bite of pricier Shimano stoppers, the lever feel is good – they just need some heat in them to really shine.

**MBUK VERDICT** ★★★★★

Super-fun ride that benefits from sharp reactions and a playful attitude, but not the best climber