



# MARIN ALPINE TRAIL CARBON 1

**£3,055** Big fun on a (relatively) small budget

**Marin's original alloy**-framed Alpine Trail proved the viability of producing a burly enduro bike on a budget. Now the Californian brand have designed a new version that not only looks and performs better than its predecessor, but is available with a lighter carbon fibre front end, too – and all without breaking the bank.

## The frame

In essence, the new Alpine Trail isn't a far cry from the old one. It's still a 150mm-travel 29er, based around Marin's MultiTrac suspension design, which uses an alloy rocker link (now forged rather than welded) to actuate the shock and provide a progressive leverage rate. The rear end is still Series 4 aluminium, but on the Alpine Trail Carbon 1 and Carbon 2 the front triangle is now moulded in sleek unidirectional carbon fibre. While the Alpine Trail 7 and XR remain full-aluminium, the geometry changes are consistent across the range.

In line with current trends, the new bike has been raked out with a longer

reach, up from 465mm to 480mm on the large size we tested, and a slacker head angle, now a stable 63.5 degrees. At the same time, the seat tube has been steepened considerably, to 78 degrees, giving an upright climbing position. The BB remains an already-low 35mm below the axles, and chainstay length stays the same, too, at a compact 430mm. Seat tube height and standover are noticeably low, giving the Alpine Trail an elegant, continuous line from head tube to dropouts.

Finishing touches include an additional bottle mount on the underside of the top tube – ideal for securing tools/spares – plus integrated down tube and chainstay protectors. Cable routing is fully internal, but the rubber grommets in the entry ports don't clamp the cables, so rough descents are accompanied by a hollow rattle.

## The kit

For the money, the kit you get on the Carbon 1 is excellent. The 160mm-

## SPEC

**Frame** Carbon fibre front triangle, Series 4 aluminium alloy rear, 150mm (5.9in) travel  
**Fork** RockShox Yari RC, 160mm (6.3in) travel  
**Shock** RockShox Deluxe Select+  
**Drivetrain** Shimano Deore with FSA Comet cranks (1x12)  
**Wheelset** Marin rims on Shimano MT-410B hubs, Maxxis Assegai 3C MaxxTerra EXO+ (f) and 3C MaxxGrip DD (r) 29x2.5in tyres  
**Brakes** Shimano MT420 callipers with MT4100 levers, 180mm rotors  
**Bar/stem** Marin, 780mm/Marin 3D Forged, 35mm  
**Seatpost/saddle** TranzX YSP23JL, 150mm/Marin Speed Concept  
**Weight** 15.78kg (34.8lb), large size without pedals

travel RockShox Yari RC fork has decent damping and gives superb support, matched at the rear by the Select+ RC air shock. Wide (29mm internal) Marin rims shod with 2.5in Maxxis Assegai rubber, with reinforced EXO+ and Double Down casings, further improve the bike's descending ability, the blocky tread pattern maintaining grip in even the filthiest of conditions – although we question Marin's decision to spec the softer 3C MaxxGrip compound on the rear and the harder MaxxTerra option up front.

The four-piston Shimano MT420 brakes assist on the downhill too, but we're not fans of the long MT4100 levers, which don't give as effective modulation as Shimano's shorter Servowave levers and can suffer from a wandering bite point. Powering the bike is Shimano's wide-range, 12-speed Deore drivetrain, which shifts smoothly, provided you adjust the B-tension screw just right. The 150mm-travel TranzX dropper post functions reliably, but the lever is prone to getting stuck, needing a hard push, and it'd be nice to see a longer-





With a great ride and a price tag lower than that of some brands' carbon frames, the Marin is a real bargain



The RockShox Deluxe Select+ rear shock feels great out on the trails



While the TransX post works fine (save for a sticky lever), we'd prefer a bit more travel

drop post on a bike of this size. Despite the carbon front triangle, the Alpine Trail Carbon 1 weighs a chunky 15.78kg. We can't say we noticed this being a limiting factor on the trail, though.

#### The ride

The old Alpine Trail featured as one of our Long-term Rides back in 2017. It was a fast descender, but not without its shortcomings. The instant we threw a leg over the new one, we could tell the bar had been raised. Those geometry changes have made what was already a confidence-inspiring machine into something we were happy to hurl at full speed into some pretty scary terrain. The extra length, coupled with the slack head angle and low centre of gravity, makes it easy to maintain a well-centred stance and just let the suspension do its thing.

Running 30 per cent sag, we found the rear end stayed super-active, tracking well over rough ground, yet still ramping up with an impressively bottomless feel on bigger hits. If it weren't for the cable rattle, things would feel exceptionally smooth,

#### HIGHS

Geometry tweaks make it an even better descender

Super-active rear suspension

Worthy of upgrading when you have the cash

#### LOWS

Annoying cable rattle

A few minor spec grumbles

Heavy for a carbon bike

even though the bike isn't specced with top-of-the-range dampers.

Although this is a bike designed with gravity riding in mind, we still enjoyed taking it on some longer missions. It climbs reasonably well, even if the deep-tread, soft-compound tyres do drag a bit and the seatpost drop could be longer.

While it performs well as it is, what really makes the Alpine Trail Carbon 1 stand out is what a great platform it would be for some upgrades. Our criticisms, which are small, are all down to the value-conscious build kit. The frame – which ticks all the boxes, with excellent geometry and suspension – makes for a race-ready enduro rig that rips just as well on mellower trails as on the tougher stuff. **ED THOMSETT**  
[www.marinbikes.com](http://www.marinbikes.com)

#### MBUK VERDICT

Great frame geometry and suspension action, backed up by sleek carbon fibre looks and a solid suite of parts for the price