



● Review

Words Jak Brightwell | Images Boston Bright

MARIN SAN QUENTIN 3

Trails in the morning, dirt jumps in the afternoon

Marin first started making bikes back in 1986. Mountain bikes have changed a lot since then, but there has always been space for the humble hardtail. Marin's San Quentin is their answer for the rider who wants a rowdy, fun and aggressive hardtail that can tackle all sorts of terrain. For 2023, Marin has given the San Quentin a revamp. With input from slopestyle legend, Matt Jones, Marin has crafted an aggressive hardtail that blurs the lines between a trail bike and a dirt jumper.

Details

The Marin San Quentin 3 is a 27.5-inch-wheeled package, built around a 140mm fork and an alloy frame. The low-slung look of the frame is almost reminiscent of a dirt jump bike, but where the San Quentin differs is its geometry. With a 64-degree head angle, 450mm reach on a medium frame, and 425mm chainstays for all sizes, this bike has the numbers of a modern trail bike. To help keep the rider's centre of mass low, Marin has designed this bike with a super-low stand over height. The medium-sized version I tested has just 340mm of seat tube, which is 90mm shorter than the previous model.

The Marin San Quentin 3 comes in a very sleek white-to-black faded paint job with tasteful, red splattered logos. Overall, the paint finish on the frame is fantastic and it held up well while testing.

The components on the San Quentin 3 are very solid. For a price tag of \$3200, Marin has managed to pack a lot of value into the build.

It comes with a Marzocchi Bomber Z2 fork, which felt super smooth and plush. The fork handled its 140mm of travel well and didn't feel like it wanted to dive while out on the trail. The Rail damper inside the fork is low maintenance and has a firm lockout.

The bike also features Shimano four-piston brakes and sensibly sized 203mm and 180mm rotors, which bedded in nicely and had plenty of power.

It also comes equipped with a 12-speed Shimano drivetrain. The Shimano Deore derailleur has a proper, serviceable clutch inside and the SunRace cassette boasts an 11- to 51-tooth gear range.

Although Marin has done a good job with the components on this bike, there are a couple of small areas for improvement. It would be nice if they'd taken advantage of the frame's super-low stand over height by equipping the San Quentin with a longer dropper post. I'm about 175cm tall and a medium frame was a good fit, but I had to run the 150mm dropper at the minimum insert line to get the seat at the right height. Of course, this could be easily remedied with any of the longer-travel modern dropper posts available on the market.

The bike also comes with Vee Tire Co's Attack HPL tyres, which are excellent, but almost too grippy – the rolling resistance when pedalling between trails was noticeable. Swapping the rear tyre for something lower profile would be a quick way to score some easy speed.



“It felt light and nimble, almost dancing down the trail.”

Climbing

For a bike built for sending it down trails and boosting jumps, the San Quentin 3 climbed exceptionally well. Its relatively steep 77-degree seat tube angle made for a very comfortable pedalling position that felt great when putting power down. The wide-range 12-speed drivetrain and the firm lockout on the fork made any climb felt manageable.

Descending

The San Quentin came alive once I got to the top of the hill. The smaller 27.5-inch wheels and tight rear end helps it rip through corners. It felt light and nimble, almost dancing down the trail, yet sitting on the right side of control. However, I did find that the smaller wheels and shorter frame started tended to get overwhelmed on the steeper, chunky terrain on some of Wellington's janky trails. The slack head angle and plush fork do a great job of keeping things steady when the trail gets rough, though. Overall, it has an awesome sweet spot for fun, flowy or techy grade-three to-four trails where there are lots of line choices and trail gaps to find.

The other place this bike felt great is in the air. When out on the trail, it rode like an aggressive hardtail, but it performed like a purebred jump bike off the ground. It felt firm and didn't soak up the lip when pushing off steeper dirt jumps, and it was incredibly balanced and confidence-inspiring in the air, while also being nimble and easy to throw around.

Who's it for?

The San Quentin 3 is a whole heap of fun. It's a confidence-inspiring bike that doesn't compromise on fun or playfulness and is perfect for someone who wants get rowdy on trails in the morning, then boost jumps in the afternoon.

At RRP\$3199, it's a great value option for someone looking for their next mountain bike to progress on, or a teenager wanting a bike they can thrash all over the trails.

For lower price-point options, Marin also has the San Quentin in two lower-spec models, as well as a frame-only option for those wanting to build something up. 🍈

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521 KAWAKAWA-ORERE RD, ORERE POINT

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