

First rides

SWINGING A LEG OVER WHAT'S HOT THIS MONTH

SANTA CRUZ BRONSON CC

£7,399 / 650b / santacruz bikes.co.uk

NEED TO KNOW

- Updated version of Santa Cruz's best-selling trail bike
- New geometry, VPP suspension and spec
- Carbon frames available in flagship CC guise and heavier C version

Santa Cruz's best-selling trail bike gets a makeover with improved suspension and geometry

Not long ago, an 'affordable' Santa Cruz Bronson, built with cheaper and heavier carbon, passed through our doors. But unfortunately this 'C' model didn't exactly light a fire in our bellies. Disregarding the way the spec had been compromised to hit the price point, we never really found a suspension set-up that delivered good grip and support, and we couldn't get comfortable or confident with the conservative sizing.

The guys at Santa Cruz seem to agree with us, because the version-two Bronson squares up to both these criticisms and sends them packing — and the end result is a bike that's all the better for it.

Much more than a trickle-down, the flow of both features and attitude from the Nomad could be better described as a torrent. Not only does the new Bronson get a Nomad-shadowing silhouette — with the upper link now attached to the top tube — it also gets more aggressive geometry and toned-down VPP suspension.

By adding, on average, 25mm to the reach measurement, the Bronson no longer feels cramped, and it's a whole lot more confident when you start twisting the throttle. This extra stability is further improved by a one-degree reduction in the head angle and a 5mm drop in BB height. To complete the package of geometry changes, Santa Cruz has snipped 6mm off



The new Bronson performs brilliantly but remains pricey



SPECIFICATION

Frame Carbon CC, 150mm travel
Shock Fox Float X Factory
Fork RockShox Pike, RCT3 Solo Air, 150mm travel
Wheels Industry Nine Torch hubs, ENVE M60 rims, Maxxis Minion DHR 2 TR 27.5x2.3in tyres
Drivetrain Race Face Next SL carbon crank, SRAM XXI shifter and r-mech
Brakes SRAM Guide Ultimate, 180mm
Components Santa Cruz carbon bar 800mm, Easton Haven stem, RockShox Reverb Stealth
Weight 12.26kg (27.04lb)
Sizes S, M, L, XL

GEOMETRY

Size ridden L
Rider height 5ft 10in
Head angle 66°
Seat angle 74°
BB height 341mm
Chainstay 432mm
Front centre 757mm
Wheelbase 1,189mm
Down tube 705mm
Top tube 618mm
Reach 445mm

SPOTLIGHT ON...

VPP3 suspension

All Santa Cruz suspension bikes use a system called VPP, or Virtual Pivot Point. The unique feature of VPP is the two counter-rotating links — one between the bottom bracket and the swingarm, and one connecting the swingarm to the shock and the front triangle. By changing the length, angle and location of the links, Santa Cruz can tune the axle path and suspension feel. The new Bronson gets the third-generation VPP design, and it gives a far more consistent seat-of-the-pants sensation as it moves through its travel. Santa Cruz has also tidied up the lower link, tucking it into a recess in the seat tube, and made it less vulnerable to rock strikes. Still present are the grease ports for ease of maintenance.



Santa Cruz's new suspension offers improved consistency

the chainstay length, by moving to a wider, 148mm dropout spacing, and straightened up the seat tube for improved climbing.

Previous VPP designs have exhibited a 'hammocky' feel, whereby the suspension naturally wants to fall into the middle of the travel. Changes introduced on the Nomad eliminated this, giving a more consistent progression from the sag point. It's this

It now rides like a mini-Nomad. It's immensely rewarding

third-generation VPP configuration that's now standard on the Bronson, and allied to the Fox Float X shock (with EVOL can) the result is greatly simplified set-up, the ability to run a much wider range of sag, no more quiriness and also much improved small-bump sensitivity.

The new Bronson is not only the spitting image of its big brother; it now actually rides a lot like a mini-Nomad. Sure, it can get pin-balled around on real chundery trails, and the suspension performance on square-edge hits can leave your feet slapping around a bit on the pedals, but this new Bronson feels immensely rewarding to ride fast and aggressively. It's agile, lively and responsive, and it pedals with such efficiency that it renders any compression platform redundant.

One thing does remain from the old Bronson, however, and that's the pricing.

Don't expect to get much change from five grand for a low-spec CC bike, or £4k for the 280g heavier C frame adorned with a decent spec. Such is the brand's popularity, though, that even at these prices, we doubt you'll be assured of exclusivity on the trails.

Danny Milner

mbr 1ST IMPRESSION

- ✓ **HIGHS** Real improvements to sizing, handling and suspension. Looks and rides like a mini-Nomad.
- ✗ **LOWS** Cable routing optimised for rear brake on the right. Ugly front mech mount. Those prices.



Cable routing optimised for right-hand rear brakes