

SANTA CRUZ 5010 C.



Price: £3,999.00. AM Spec – No frame-only option
From: Jungle Products, santacruz bikes.co.uk

Frame // Santa Cruz Carbon C
Shock // Fox Float EVOL
Fork // RockShox Pike RC Solo Air 130
Hubs // SRAM 100mm QR15 front,
Boost rear
Rims // Easton AR24, 32H
Tyres // Maxxis Minion 2.3in and
Ardent 2.25 27.5in
Chainset // Race Face AEffect SL
32T 175mm
Front Mech // N/A
Rear Mech // SRAM GX 1x11
Shifters // SRAM GX 11sp
Brakes // Shimano SLX M675
Stem // Race Face Turbine Basic 35
Bars // Race Face Ride 35 x 760mm
Seatpost // RockShox Reverb Stealth 31.6
x 150mm drop
Saddle // WTB Volt Race
Size Tested // Medium
Sizes Available // S, M, L, XL
Weight // 28.7lbs w/o pedals
Tester // Chipps

This is the bike that was launched just over two years ago as the Solo (and quickly changed to the 5010 due to another bike company having a ‘Solo’ model). Originally, the bike had 125mm of travel, came in a fetching orange colour among others, and made a few waves, though not nearly as many as its big brother, the Bronson, coinciding as it did with the explosion of that enduro thing. At the time, the feeling that the 5010 was a bike that wasn’t quite as good as the Bronson probably put more people off the 5010 than it should have, because the original bike was a great one. It wasn’t perfect though and many complained it was a little cramped in reach and, well, just not *enduro* enough for them.

Skip forward a couple of years and the whole VPP line has had a redesign – from the Nomad, through Bronson to the 5010. The VPP system has been neatened up, with the always-vulnerable ‘dog’s balls’ lower link now tucked into the frame above the bottom bracket shell and the bearings brought away from the muck. To further bring the bike into the future, the top tube has gained an inch and the head angle has lost a degree. Out back, the bike has gained 148mm dropouts for greater tyre clearance when running bigger tyres on wider rims, as is the done thing. Talking of clearance, where the lower link sits – right in front of the back wheel – leaves a natural shelf for mud and grit to collect, which has been our experience on test. And despite Santa Cruz Bike’s suggestion to not clean your bikes as often, this is going to be an area that will always get special hosepipe attention when cleaning up. We know that Santa Cruz bearings are very weatherproof (and the lower link has two grease ports too) but can’t help that thinking that it’s asking for trouble. You can tell it’s not rained in California for four years...

In terms of spec, you probably won’t believe this, but we asked for the lowest spec bike we could get and the one with the ‘C’ rather than the ‘CC’ carbon construction. C-Carbon is the base level frame, with the same stiffness, strength and performance as the top level bike, but it uses lower strength carbon, so needs more of it for the same strength which adds 250g to the frame weight. Even we are a little tired of seeing glowing reviews for £8,000 bikes when that’s probably not what we’d buy ourselves. This spec seemed a little more down to earth (and only takes one credit limit, rather than the whole family’s).

The Ride

Hopping on the 5010 we expect great things – and we get them. The bike feels like it’s matured. The longer reach of the frame, combined with a shorter stem suits the more modern up and forward ‘attack’ position. In fact, less energetic riding styles are rewarded with a slightly washy front end and it’s only when you get up and at ‘em that the bike wakes up.

The smidgin of extra confidence given by the slacker front end and the fluttery smooth suspension will bring a smile to any rider. The 5010 now truly feels like a trail bike for 98% of British riding. It’s lively to pedal, easy to move around and a blast on the descents. It does so without a great deal of heft, and without you being aware of just how much the suspension is flattering you. It’s definitely moved up a notch from a ‘but what is it for?’ bike and into the realms of the true all-rounder. With alloy versions inevitably to follow (late summer 2016 apparently), we expect to see a lot of these around.

All the components worked very well. The tyre and wheel choice has stood up to Californian dusty crunch and Calderdale grit equally well, while the gear selection wasn’t found wanting. The subtle upgrade of a 35mm bar on a tiny stem has meant that weight-forward, fork-loading, bike-bossing is as satisfying as you’d want it and the 150mm Reverb is made possible due to a dropped seat and top tube junction from the previous model.

When sat down and jamming, there isn’t a hint of pedal feedback to the bike, and the Fox EVOL air shock lends the bike a willingness on the smaller bumps that you can just mash (or spin, up to you) through bumpier descents and even rough climbs without a thought of how much the back end is working. It does feel like a ‘two cups of coffee’ bike in that you do need to keep bossing the bike around to get the most of it, but it’ll reward you with some nimble line choices when needed and a lot of ‘get away with it’ when you let your attention slip for a moment. The line between trail, all-mountain, all-rounder and all-day bike has just been blurred.



Solid, beautiful, exactly what you'd expect.



Subtle is always effective.

CONCLUSION.

Three bikes. All with similarities, all with differences, and each will have supporters and detractors. But that 130mm of travel? A compromise, sure – but not much of one. Just enough travel to slay a frankly surprising amount of technical trail, and a larger slice of difficult descent than you'd think. And little enough that the corresponding climb becomes a pleasure, rather than a chore. In other words: just right.

GT SENSOR



The GT Sensor is an unusual beast. A great looking bike in stealth black, with a fine componentry selection, a modern-feeling cockpit and an unusual and cunning suspension design. That BB-isolating suspension does create some interesting handling characteristics; it's not the most poppy of bikes, but the Sensor is a great all-day mile-muncher and it is one heck of a climber. Give it its head, though, and it's impressively fast downhill too.

KONA PRECEPT



The Precept is firstly great value for money, bringing a mid-travel trail bike within reach of nearly every credit card limit. It's well made and performs well, although the spec and the geometry, don't appear to have moved with the time. The triple chainset does a good job of reminding us why it's an endangered species these days and the bike sizing seems odd. However, if you're after a one-stop intro to trail riding, start here.

SANTA CRUZ 5010



It seems that the geometry tweaks to the 5010 (longer top tube, slacker head angle, 5mm more travel) have taken it firmly from 'What kind of bike is it? A race bike? An all-rounder?' into all-round, take-on anything trail bike territory. It's a joy to ride and it's all the bike that most people will need for most of their riding. How much of an issue that muddy lower linkage is going to be will only become evident in time. For now, though, thumbs up in the air. ■