

# Vitus Escarpe 290 VR £1,190.00

Big wheeled, full-sprung slayer that's a blast as well as a bargain

BikeRadar score ★★★★★ 4.5/5



The Vitus Escarpe 290 VR is an awful lot of trail bike for the money (Russell Burton)



## BikeRadar verdict

"A superb value, impressively sorted and seemingly unstoppable trail tank"

- + **Highs:** Smooth 140mm fork, poised yet plush suspension, superb-value
- **Lows:** Hefty, comes in a box from ireland not your local shop
- ✓ **Buy if:** You want an addictive trail crusher that offers an insane amount for the money

If there was one question we repeatedly got asked about the big wheeled Vitus it was "How much did you say that was?", generally asked between ragged breaths by riders who'd just been left floundering in its wake.

To be fair, the low price is due to an ongoing price reduction from the original £1,700 / \$2,703 / AU\$3,740, only made possible because the bike is shipped at the Chain Reaction Cycles megastore in Ireland. It's hardly a level playing field for conventional dealers, but ultimately what value you put on help from your local shop is your decision not ours.

What's undeniable is that you're getting an incredible amount for your money. The most impressive part is the inclusion of a KS E-Ten external cable dropper post as standard. That means there are no immediate upgrades to be made to create a totally trail ready bike and also makes it clear that this is primarily a big hitting fun bike.



The Monarch RL-augmented suspension starts plush but retains its poise when cornering

Manitou forks are a rare sight these days and while the Minute Expert is long in the tooth, it's impressively supple, adjustable and well proven. A Hexlock 15mm axle keeps tracking accuracy bearable once you've got the hang of the awkward twist lock closure.

## A proper trail tank

The Monarch RL rear shock floats between a short linkage and the rear swingarm to create an initially falling then rising shock rate for a plush start but planted cornering poise. It also amplifies the feeling of the 135mm of rear [wheel](#) travel to match the smooth 140mm stroke up front.

The naturally smooth-rolling, speed-sustaining effect of the large volume [29ertyes](#), on reasonably wide tubeless-ready rims, maximises 29er control and momentum. All in all you've got a proper trail tank that mows through long stretches of serious sized debris without flinching.

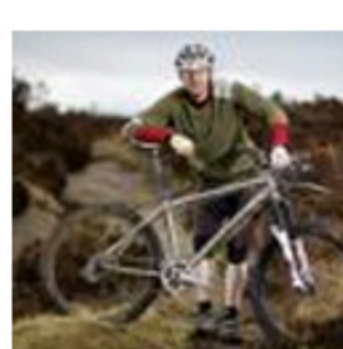


The Escarpe needs little invitation to cane its way downhill

Okay, the skinny fork legs do definitely flex when driven hard. But there's enough control in the 740mm bar, 60mm stem and big Vigilante front tyre on broad WTB rims to hold the front wheel onto your chosen line.

Vitus has been wise enough to fit 180mm rotors for when you do want to stop the runaway train effect too.

You definitely need serious muscle to get the big wheels and considerable 14.7kg bulk of the Vitus going in the first place, but it takes a lot to spill speed pedalling out of rhythm. Climbing traction is excellent, enabling it to carry momentum on roller coaster trails. It even finished XC style rides with surprisingly good speed.



### Guy Kesteven

Freelance Writer,  
UK



Guy started filling his brain with cycle stats and steaming up bike shop windows back in 1980. He worked the other side of those windows from '89 while getting a degree in "describing broken things covered in mud" (archaeology). Dug historical holes in the ground through the early '90s, then became a pro bike tester in '97. Guy has ridden thousands of bikes and even more components the world over since then and can remember them all in vivid, haunting detail. Can't remember where the car keys are, though.

**Age:** 44      **Height:** 180cm / 5' 11"  
**Weight:** 68kg / 150lb  
**Chest:** 91cm / 36in  
**Waist:** 76cm / 30in

**Discipline:** Strict sadomasochist  
**Preferred Terrain:** Technical off-piste singletrack and twisted back roads. Up, down, along — so long as it's faster than the last time he did it he's happy.  
**Current Bikes:** An ever changing herd of test machines from Tri bikes to fat bikes and everything in between.  
**Dream Bike:** His Nicolai Helios AM custom tandem  
**Beer of Choice:** Theakston's Old Peculier (not Peculiar)

**Location:** Yorkshire, UK

## Specification

Name:	Escarpe 290 VR (15)
Built by:	Vitus
Price:	£1,190.00
Bottom Bracket	Shimano (BSA)
Brakes	Shimano BR-M445 Hydraulic Disc, 180mm Rotor
Cassette	Shimano CS-HG50, 11t-36t, 10-Speed
Chain	KMC X10, 10-Speed
Cranks	Shimano Deore FC-M615, 170mm, 38t x 24t
Fork	Manitou Minute Expert, 140mm Travel, ISO Air spring
Frame Material	Hydroformed 6061-T6 Aluminium Frame with Four-bar V-Link Rear Suspension
Front Derailleur	Shimano Deore Direct Mount FD-M616
Front Hub	Formula - 6 Bolt, 100mm x 15mm
Front Tyre	WTB Vigilante TCS, Dual DNA Compound, UST Aramid Bead, 29" x 2.3"
Handlebar	Vitus Riser Bar, 7075 Double Butted Alloy, 15mm Rise, 740mm Wide
Headset Type	FSA Orbit 1.5 Zero Stack
Rear Derailleur	Shimano SLX RD-M675 Shadow Plus
Rear Hub	Formula - 6 Bolt, 142mm x 12mm
Rear Shock	RockShox Monarch RT
Rear Tyre	Dual DNA Compound, UST Aramid Bead, 29" x 2.25"
Rims	WTB ST i23 TCS, 29"
Saddle	Vitus
Seatpost	KS E-Ten Remote
Shifters	Shimano Deore SL-M610 Rapid Fire Plus, 10-Speed
Stem	Vitus, 3D Forged 6061-T6 Aluminium
Weight (kg)	14.7
Spoke Type	Stainless
Frame size tested	M

## BikeRadar ratings

- ★★★★★ **Exceptional:** a genuine class leader
- ★★★★★ **Very good:** one of the best you can buy
- ★★★★ **Good:** it'll do the job well
- ★★★ **Average**
- ★★ **Below average:** flawed in some way
- ★ **Poor:** simply put, don't bother
- ★★★★★ **Dangerous, stupid or both**