

## BIKES &amp; GEAR //

Mountain Bike Helmets

## Reviewed: MET Parabellum Trail Helmet

A comfortable, lightweight, and good-looking option from a brand that's new to the US **BY GLORIA LIU**



**MET Parabellum Trail Helmet** (Photo courtesy of MET)

Chances are, if you live in the US, you probably haven't heard of MET. Though the family-owned, Italian company has been making bike helmets since 1987, prior to a couple years ago, you couldn't buy one here in the States unless you ordered it online from its European facility—and then, it wasn't certified according to US standards. But if you follow pro cycling, you may have seen its road helmets on the likes of certain UCI teams including the old Liquigas team and currently, MTN-Qhubeka. On the mountain side, pro rider Hannah Barnes rocks MET. Last year, the company started working with a US distributor to get the majority of its helmets approved by the CPSC, which oversees safety standards for helmets sold in the US.

I've been putting MET's Parabellum trail helmet to the test. On our scale, my size medium helmet weighed just 274 grams—but it was a prototype, European-approved CE sample. The claimed weight on the CPSC version is 350g for a medium, 400g for a large; which is more in line with similar offerings from other brands. (Like all of MET's helmets, the Parabellum comes in only two sizes: Medium or Large.)

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Helmet bodies are generally constructed in this way: Start with a skeleton, surround it with impact-absorbing foam, cover it all in a hard shell. Increasing impact protection could be straightforward—just add more foam. But that leads to a bulkier helmet, and so manufacturers have taken various approaches to more sophisticated constructions that soak up impact while keeping the helmet body lightweight and well-ventilated.

MET's approach incorporates a two-piece shell, which you can see in the helmet's outer construction: The two colors indicate the separate pieces. The company calls the construction HES, and the idea is that the shells incorporate overlapping pieces that reinforce the helmet without making it too rigid, so that it balances strength with energy absorption in the event of an impact. MET says the design enables it to use less reinforcing material in the rest of the construction, to keep weight down. MET also claims the design spreads the force of an impact across a wider surface area and thus further minimizes forces in a crash. Whether all the engineering talk above is legit or just marketing speak, the Parabellum has passed CPSC safety certifications (as well as CE EN 1078, the European standard, and AS/NZ 2063, the Australia-New Zealand equivalent).

Beyond all that "how it's made" stuff, the helmet feels good thanks in part to MET's gel padding system. The clear, squishy, hypoallergenic gel pad sits on the forehead, making the helmet fit snugly but comfortably once I tightened it using the spin dial in the back. The soft, rubbery surface kept the helmet from sliding around, and made the fit system highly effective. MET also claims that it keeps the head cooler compared to material padding, though I wasn't able to verify this during our northeastern winter. But I can count, and my prototype helmet has 28 cutout vents—more than the average trail helmet, methinks. Vents don't always translate to ventilation, but it is a promising sign. And what I don't need to be an engineer to know is that the gel will almost definitely not soak up forehead sweat in the summer, helping to minimize helmet stink. (Honestly, not a problem I've ever really dealt with, but apparently this is a thing.) And in addition to being adjustable for tension, the fit system can be adjusted for height, too.

The visor is large and plenty to keep the sun out of your eyes on a bright day. It can be pushed up and out of the way when you don't need it, but I found that bumps on the trail would sometimes knock it back down. The straps are soft, thin, and supple nylon. Glasses can be stowed relatively securely, albeit with a little bit of futzing (you have to lift the visor up first), in the front vents under the visor.

One note for the ladies: There is no opening in the back for your ponytail. The Parabellum comes down fairly low in the rear, providing good coverage for the back of the head, which is a positive. However, if you're wearing a ponytail, you'll have to wear it low to avoid pushing the helmet too far forward in the front, and having the visor then obstruct your vision. Not a dealbreaker for me, but a good reason to "try before you buy."

Finally, it's time for my Shallow Hal to have a word. I'm digging the colors: The Parabellum comes in three neutral color schemes (white/grey, black/white, or black with neon yellow accents), or it also comes in a bright blue, purple, or orange with red accents, which is the version I got. The orange adds some pop to an outfit, and it's going to come in handy during hunting season here in Pennsylvania, too. But thanks to its good looks, and its light and comfortable feel, this helmet is going to get plenty of wear in all the months leading up to then, too.

**Price:** \$229

**Info:** [met-helmets.com](http://met-helmets.com)