

Shimano SLX Shadow Plus rear mech dramatically reduces chain derailment

With only three frame sizes the Vitus won't fit everyone

A short 60mm stem and wide 740mm handlebar boost control

The V-Link suspension and RockShox Monarch RT shock deliver 140mm of travel

VITUS ESCARPE 275 VR

£1,199.99

SPECIFICATION

Frame 6061-T6 aluminium, 140mm travel
Shock RockShox Monarch RT
Fork RockShox Sektor Silver RL, 140mm travel
Wheels Formula hubs, Mavic XM 319 rims, Continental X-King 2.4/2.2in tyres
Drivetrain FSA Comet MegaExo chainset, Shimano Deore f-mech, SLX r-mech and shifters
Brakes Shimano SLX 180mm
Components Vitus
Sizes S, M, L
Weight 14.59kg (32.16lb)
Contact chainreactioncycles.com

GEOMETRY

Size tested L
Head angle 66.4°
Seat angle 70.2°
BB height 336mm
Chainstay 437mm
Front centre 735mm
Wheelbase 1,172mm
Down tube 693mm
Top tube 620mm
Reach 443mm

With two back-to-back **mbr** test wins, Vitus is on a roll. First the Sentier 275 VR stomped to victory in our Hardtail of the Year test, then last month the Escarpe 275 VRS walked all over the competition in our 650b full-suspension test. Can the Escarpe 275 VR make it three in a row?

Sharing the same frame and rear shock as the Escarpe VRS that won last month's test, we already knew that the VR was a sound 140mm platform to build upon. Next to the Canyon and Giant, however, its chunky welds and less sophisticated tubing profiles mean that the Vitus frame isn't anything like as polished or refined. It's also noticeably heavier at the back.

What it lacks in finesse, however, is more than compensated for by its long, low and slack geometry. The frame is also packed with all the latest features, including a tapered head tube, direct mount front derailleur and ISCG tabs for fitting a chain device. Less common are the interchangeable rear dropouts — not that you'll want to run anything other than the 142x12mm set-up supplied. It's also worth pointing out that the Vitus is the only bike in this test to use a dedicated 142x12mm rear hub and benefit fully from the stiffness gains of the bolt-thru rear-end.

SUSPENSION

With its silky smooth chromed upper tubes, the 140mm-travel RockShox Sektor Silver is super-sensitive, but it has a tendency to spike, rather than absorb, the bigger hits. It also lacks the control and support of the more sophisticated damping that comes with the Reba fitted to the Canyon.



Keeping it RockShox front and back, the Monarch RL rear shock is easy to set up thanks to the sag gradients on the shock body. Damping and support are both first rate, so the 140mm suspension never felt vague or wallowy. The threshold lever, which is basically a lockout, is also handy for firming up the rear suspension on long fire-road climbs.

COMPONENTS

Without a shadow of doubt the Escarpe VR has the best cockpit layout of any bike in this test. The wide bar and →



Shimano SLX disc brakes use 180mm rotors and offer ample stopping power

WE LOVE

Great geometry and killer spec

WE HATE
Sketchy Conti
tyres

On-trend stubby stem complements long, low and lazy geometry



stubby stem are the perfect match for the rangy top tube and slack, stable steering geometry.

This bike was also the quietest, thanks to the clutch mechanism in the Shadow Plus rear derailleur that helps stop the chain bouncing around and derailing from the chainrings on choppy ground. With amazing SLX brakes and big 180mm rotors, stopping duties are well and truly covered.

In fact the only suspect bit of kit on the Vitus are the Conti tyres. Normally increased rolling resistance on a tyre guarantees extra traction, but the X-Kings here are slow while also lacking grip.

it felt amazing, but on more sedate trails we felt a little over-biked and underpowered, which in turn robbed us of enthusiasm.

Maybe it was the shorter 170mm cranks reducing leverage, but it probably had more to do with the bike's overall weight. We actually sped up the rebound damping on the shock just to make it easier to lift the rear wheel off the ground when hopping over roots. Also, there's the effect of those draggy Conti X-King tyres that made the bike feel like had its top speed restricted.

PERFORMANCE

Throwing a leg over the Vitus for the first time we were instantly struck by its modern layout, where the short stem, wide bar and slack head angle are all textbook trail bike essentials. The BB height was also nice and low, so even though it has 140mm of suspension you don't feel perched on top of the bike.

It pedalled efficiently too, with very little interaction with the suspension, so it's even stranger then that this bike lacked zip. When assisted by gravity on steep descents,

VERDICT

It's hard to find fault with the Escarpe VR given the price. The riding position, geometry and spec are all spot-on, but it wasn't enough for Vitus to win this test and bag a hat-trick.

We never managed to pinpoint it, but something about the ride of the Escarpe VR held it back. It totally slays on the descents, but its weight and tyres say "not so fast" once the trails flat out or pitch up steeply. For these reasons, the Vitus just wasn't as good an all-rounder as the Canyon.

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SLX rear mech uses clutch mechanism to take up chain slack