



Prime cuts: The Santa Cruz Butcher is impressive in how it pedals like it has way less than 6 inches of travel, but feels like it has more than 6 inches on the descents.

MBA *Test*

It Slices And Dices

The Santa Cruz Butcher

The Santa Cruz Superlight's and Heckler's single-pivot rear suspensions are what put Santa Cruz Bicycles on the map. Although Santa Cruz has championed the VPP (Virtual Pivot Point) dual-link rear suspension, their single-pivot designs still deliver the best performance bang for the buck.

Santa Cruz updated the simple, single-pivot suspension in 2010 with their APP (Actual Pivot Point), which adds a swinglink to drive the shock and provide the shock spring rate characteristics of their VPP suspension without some of that system's compromises. Although the APP moniker may sound like a spoof on their VPP acronym, APP suspension performance is no joke.

WHO IS IT MADE FOR?

The Butcher is a 6-inch-travel, all-mountain trailbike that can be equipped with either a lightweight trailbike spec or beefier components. It parallels the Santa Cruz Nomad in its versatility without the complexity. The ideal Butcher rider is one who works hard to gain every foot of elevation possible so he can challenge himself with a technical descent.



WHAT IS IT MADE FROM?

Santa Cruz is offering the aluminum Butcher as a frame only (\$1350) and in 12 build kits, most of which share a few fork options yet vary in drivetrain, wheel, cockpit components and brake choices. The Butcher frame uses a tapered head tube that accepts both 5.5- and 6-inch-travel forks, has integrated cable routing for handlebar-mounted adjustable seatpost remotes, and uses robust, 15-millimeter axles threaded directly into the swingarm pivot. Our size medium Butcher featured the XO/AM kit, which sells for \$5215.

WHICH COMPONENTS STAND OUT?

The Butcher features a 6-inch-travel RockShox Lyrik fork, but elsewhere is equipped with components likely to be found on a high-end, lightweight cross-country bike. This

includes a triple-chainring carbon Truvativ Noir crankset, Avid Elixir Mag CR brakes, Shimano XTR front derailleur and SRAM X0 rear derailleur. If you're keeping the rubber side down aboard this Butcher, that means the versatile, 2.35-inch Kenda Nevegal tires are working for you.

HOW DOES IT PERFORM?

Ergonomics: The first time you saddle up the all-new Butcher, you'll be taken by the seemingly short top tube, but comfortable with the impressively low 28-inch standover height. The 27-inch-wide Easton carbon handlebar and 70-millimeter Thomson stem are well-suited for navigating technical trails. After setting proper shock and fork sag at 25 percent, we were good to go.

Pedaling: The single-pivot mountain bike frame is nothing new, and despite hundreds of renditions, we've yet to ride one that pedals so efficiently, yet is so supple on harsh impacts. Remember, this bike has 6 inches of travel! The Fox RP23 air shock has a ProPedal feature; however, it's not necessary to reach for it. Simply leave the shock in the "open" setting. When cranking in the saddle, there's no unwanted suspension movement, and the rear effortlessly mutes trail chatter. The Butcher seems to sit into its allotted sag and remain there until a force from the terrain actuates the suspension.

Climbing: The all-mountain category can come across as myriad of compromises between climbing and descending performance. The Butcher made us rethink that impression.

This particular RockShox Lyrik fork did not have a travel-adjust feature, but by hunkering down and getting our weight over the front end, we were able to climb our favorite cross-country trails in nearly the same gear ratios as on a lightweight trailbike. Still, cresting those climbs wasn't as easy and definitely required exaggerating our body position over the front end. The Butcher feels a tad unstable with the seat extended to proper climbing position because of the short 22-inch top tube, but we were able to power it up technical ascents with the suspension's efficient power transfer and grabby Kenda Nevegal tread.

Cornering: One of the perks of setting proper suspension sag is increased traction when cornering at speed. There's a four-part recipe for the Butcher's cornering speed, and the ingredients are: the 70-millimeter stem that allows the rider to easily weight the front end; a fork that's supple and holds the intended line; a rear suspension that tracks well; and the Nevegal tires and their numerous biting edges.

Braking: Although the Avid Elixir CR Mag brakes are being replaced by the Avid X0 brakes next year (same brake, but with an alloy instead of magnesium body), they have excellent modulation and remarkable power for a brake that's at home on a cross-country race machine. The 7-inch front rotor and 6-inch rear rotor were ideal for keeping speed in check on rotor-roasting downhill.

Descending: With 6 inches of travel and a 67-degree head tube angle, it's not surprising that the Butcher knifes its way through rocks, roots and technical terrain with

Butcher

precision. To get the most out of the Butcher's descending capabilities, stay centered in the bike. Let the bike do the work beneath you, and brake before entering technical sections.

The air-sprung RockShox Lyrik is one of the most underrated 6-inch forks on the mountain, and when paired with the impressively supple, yet progressive rear end of the Butcher, the result is an impressive ride.

TRICKS, UPGRADES OR TIPS?

Our Butcher test bike featured meaty 2.35-inch tires front and rear. Riders who frequent trails where traction is abundant will find the combination perfect. Riders on largely loose-over-hardpacked trails may consider running a narrower or faster-rolling rear tire.

The ultimate upgrade for the Butcher would be an on-the-fly, height-adjustable seatpost, as it would put the bike's descending prowess at the tip of your finger. The Butcher has integrated cable routing guides for a dropper seatpost.

BUYING ADVICE

The 10 different variations of the Butcher that Santa Cruz offers speak to its versatility and the wide array of component configurations that can fall into the "all-mountain" category. If you're thinking the APP suspension is simply another way to package the same single-pivot frame design, you're mistaken. There are countless designs that are similar, yet we are hard-pressed to think of one that performs as well as the Butcher. It pedals like it has 4 inches of travel and descends like it has more than the stated 6 inches. The Butcher is a unique ride that makes the cut when it comes to climbing and dissects the trail with ease on the downhill. □



New, yet familiar: The Butcher's APP suspension design (Actual Pivot Point) is basically an acronym that pokes fun at their other suspension design, VPP (Virtual Pivot Point). The Butcher is snappy under acceleration, but has more than enough travel to soak up trail hits.



Meaty build: The 6-inch-travel RockShox Lyrik fork. APP suspension links. The Butcher's tapered head tube.

SANTA CRUZ BUTCHER

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|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Price | \$5215 |
| Country of origin | Taiwan |
| Weight | 30.5 pounds |
| Hotline | (831) 459-7560 |
| Frame tested | Medium |
| Bottom bracket height | 13.8" |
| Chainstay length | 17" |
| Top tube length | 22.5" |
| Head tube angle | 67.5° |
| Seat tube angle | 72° |
| Standover height | 28" |
| Wheelbase | 43.5" |
| Suspension travel | 6" (front) |
| Suspension travel | 6" (rear) |
| Frame material | Aluminum |
| Fork | RockShox Lyrik Solo Air |
| Shock | Fox Shox RP23 |
| Rims | DT Swiss EX500 (26") |
| Tires | Kenda Nevegal (2.35") |
| Hubs | DT Swiss 240S |
| Brakes | Avid Elixir CR Mag |
| Crankset | Truativ Noir |
| Shifters | SRAM X0 |
| Handlebar | Easton Monkey Lite (27" wide) |
| Front derailleur | Shimano XTR |
| Rear derailleur | SRAM X0 |
| Chainrings | Truativ Noir (44/32/22) |
| Cassette | SRAM 9-cog (11-34) |
| Tallest gear | 27.23 feet (per crank revolution) |
| Lowest gear | 4.40 feet (per crank revolution) |
| Pedals | None, weighed with Shimano XTR |