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Photos and First Look: Santa Cruz's Carbon Blur

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Lou Mazzante

The changes Santa Cruz made to the Blur LT last year are nothing compared to what the company cooked up with the latest version of its Blur XC. The new bike is the first from Santa Cruz to use a carbon fiber frame and, according to the company, it is one of the lightest, stiffest, strongest cross-country bikes ever made.

The new frame delivers 105 millimeters of travel and weighs a scant 4.2 pounds, including a RockShox Monarch shock. That's nearly a pound less than the aluminum version. Built with XTR components and other lightweight parts, a complete bike weighs 22 pounds, 6 ounces.

Despite the light weight, this is more than a race-only bike with disposable parts. According to Santa Cruz's Mike Ferrentino, the bike is ready for all-day riding.

"Basically, we wanted to create an XC bike that doesn't suck," Ferrentino said. "A lot of XC race bikes sacrifice strength and good geometry in search of lighter weight. We wanted a bike that not only is fast, but also handles well and is fun to ride all day long. You can actually rail this bike pretty well."

Like its bigger brother, the Blur LT, the XC uses the new VPP suspension platform that Santa Cruz introduced last year. That system features grease ports on the lower links, angular contact bearings as well as revised shock rates that provide a firmer pedaling platform while also improving big-hit bump absorption.

The bikes should be available by mid-March. The frame costs \$2,299 and

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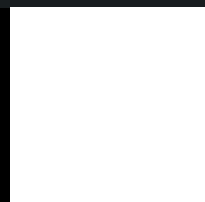
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complete bikes will run between \$4,699 and \$6,281.

The carbon frames will be manufactured in China, though Santa Cruz hasn't revealed which company is producing them or provided any details about the manufacturing process. Whatever the process is, however, Santa Cruz seems pleased with the final results.

Engineers went through 13 frame revisions before settling on the final design, and Santa Cruz claims the carbon frame is stronger than nearly every other bike the company makes.

"It's stupid strong," Ferrentino said.

When asked whether carbon might extend to other bikes in the Santa Cruz line, Ferrentino had this to say: "Given what we learned in this process, that would be a good assumption. If we can apply what we learned with the XC to other bikes down the line, you could see some staggering weight savings."

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