



Santa Cruz Nickel

Price: As tested £2799, Frame only: £1,299 w/ Fox Float R Shock **From:** Santa Cruz UK www.santacruz bikes.co.uk

Weight: 29.16lbs **Persona:** Pecan Pie

The Detail

The Santa Cruz Nickel was launched this year with its brother, the Butcher. Both bikes share Santa Cruz' APP or 'Actual Pivot Point' suspension system. This is a play on its VPP (Virtual Pivot Point) moniker. While the VPP system uses an assortment of pivots to create a near-ideal, moving, virtual pivot point, the APP system has a single pivot. While the wheel path still moves as any other single pivot (albeit one with a reasonably high, forward position), the extra linkage on the shock helps it behave as if a more complex system were working on it.

The short benefit of this is that the bike should show the suspension ideal of being supple on the small bumps, but with enough controllable suspension action to be able to absorb the bigger bumps. Why does Santa Cruz make both systems? VPP bikes get that complex 'ideal' axle path and APP bikes get to be cheaper because they're less complex (and don't have bits like carbon rockers and titanium hardware).

Looking around the bike we see a flared headtube that leads to the gently curving top tube, dipping to give great standover and the downtube that follows a fairly straight line before a hockey stick curve at the bottom. This is the only visual deviation from the 150mm Butcher and it's done purely to fit a full sized water bottle on

the down tube.

The component spec has a slightly disjointed feel to it, with non-model number Shimano cranks, Shimano SLX shifter and derailleur and Avid Elixir brakes. The Fox Alps fork is an OEM-only model, (presumably to use up its stock of 32mm QR lowers now that nearly everyone has adopted the 15mm new standard.) However, it all gels together well and works just fine.

The Ride

The initial feeling when you climb aboard the Nickel is one of squishiness. That APP stuff does seem to be helping the bike start eating at that first inch or two of travel. Even with a reasonably taut 25% sag, the back end readily gives up its initial third to half of travel whilst riding. Further travel, though, starts becoming harder to gain as the shock and APP system work together to stiffen up the travel as the terrain gets bumpy.

Previous critics of Santa Cruz top tube lengths can now rejoice that the Nickel's cockpit feels long and roomy (23in on our Medium). The feel is still very XC, rather than that of a burly freeride machine.

Starting on a rocky climb, there's a supple suspension action and a noticeable amount of bob with any amount of imperfect circle pedalling. It's a bearable amount though and the payoff is some pretty

Conclusion



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To sum up the Nickel in a word, we'd have to say 'lively'. It's an engaging bike that will probably find a great many fans, especially among the 'big days out' crowd. It appears impeccably made and looks great (though having a bendy downtube for the 8% of riders who run water bottles is a bit of a funny concession).

In these days of taut suspension design, aimed at making it as efficient as possible, we like that the Nickel approaches it with the aim of simply making the bumps smaller and the riding more fun.