



TRANSITION VAGRANT

Tester: Sean Methven
Age: 28
Height: 5'11"
Weight: 175lbs.
Inseam: 32"

VITAL STATS

Price: \$1653 Complete, \$469 Frame
Weight: 6.3lbs. (frame only)
Sizes Available: S, M (tested), L
Country of Origin: Taiwan
Contact: www.transitionbikes.com

You can get an idea of a region's culture by looking at the products of the environment. The Northwest's main exports go something like this: Starbucks, grunge music, lumberjacks and huckers. I haven't proven it yet, but I think the flannel-wearing slackers who listen to grunge music stole their look from the lumberjacks. But that's a different topic altogether. Today we're going over the Transition Vagrant and the pros and cons of this budget-minded hardtail trail bike that comes from a company based in Seattle, Washington.

If you're familiar with the Transition lineup then the Vagrant is the hardtail version of its fully suspended big brother, the Dirt Bag. This frame caters to the crowd with a tighter wallet or those who prefer to really feel the trail.

Transition started with a 6000-series heat-treated aluminum frame with round tubes in the front triangle and rectangular tubes completing the rear triangle, which can accommodate a 2.8" tire if needed. They weren't real stingy with the gussets either, using them in the head tube junction and on the seat tube/top tube/seat stay junction as well. They also gave the

frame a bit of versatility with a 1.5" head tube so you have the option of going with some of the longer travel single crown Manitou forks, and ISCG tabs for the ability to run a chain retention device. The seat tube is also long enough to run a full length post. One thing I wasn't so keen on was the 68mm bottom bracket shell that required a 122-128mm spindle length for the right chain line.

TBC is the house brand of Transition Bike Company, and it's available on all their complete builds. It's an inexpensive, no-frills, meant-to-be-abused parts line. Transition decked the frame out with as many TBC parts as possible—bars, pedals, seat, post and wheels. The 36 hole, 36mm-wide TBC Revolution wheelset could hang in the sumo class due to its 2449g weight, but managed to withstand the punishment of running a hardtail over some extremely rocky terrain with low tire pressure without showing any signs of dings or bends.

FSA throws in their Orbit XL II headset, a CNC'd FR270 stem, and a set of ISIS splined V-Drive cranks with bash ring. SRAM kept the gears changing shiftastically thanks to their X-7 derail-

leur, trigger shifters, and the X-Gen front derailleur.

The only suspension on the bike comes from the Manitou Travis which has 150mm of plush and forgiving travel. Their magnesium reverse arch casting and 20mm hexagonal thru axle are the two features that kept the fork laterally stiff and the wheel tracking straight. The fork houses their TPC+ damping system, externally adjustable rebound and compression, and comes with a 1.5" steerer tube.

The Vagrant is available in three sizes that vary in both top tube and seat tube length. My mid-sized ride had a 23.8" effective top tube and a 16.5" seat tube, which gave plenty of leg room and adjustability for seat height. With a 67 degree head angle, you can tell it's not built for blazing up the hills. The seat angle is 70 degrees and the bottom bracket sits at 13" with a 6" travel fork. Its robust rear end measures in at 16.5" of length which is spot on for any off road oriented hardtail.

My personal feeling on hardtails is that they have two uses—XC racing, and either slalom racing, skatepark, or dirt jump use. Either way, they shouldn't have any more than roughly 4 inches of suspension travel in the front end. The Vagrant did not abide by my personal rules of bike set-up, but I thought I'd give it a fair shake anyhow.

On XC rides, the slack head angle and hefty weight make climbing a bit of a chore. It would have been nice to see a travel adjust on the Manitou to drop the front end for climbing, and while Transition offers fork options, none have a travel adjuster.

I've never been a fan of hardtails on really rocky climbs, as it's a chore to keep the rear end planted for traction. This issue is pretty much negated on smoother terrain though.

Running around town on a bike built for off road riding actually proved to be pretty fun. The saddle could be raised to do some commuting and run errands or slammed down to jump stair gaps. Although the front end is a bit slack and high for true street riding and BMX style dirt jumps, it was still fun to mob down steps at speed. The downhill oriented geometry made tight jumps just too much of a chore to enjoy or feel comfortable.

Descending on this sturdy vessel was a different story altogether. The hefty parts spec held up and the slack head angle kept it controllable on the fastest and steepest pitches. The fork did a good job of absorbing some pretty good impacts while I tried to keep the rear end skimming over the rocks.

Cornering the bike took a bit of time to get adjusted to as well. The bike felt best when you got over the front end and let the rear tire break loose a bit and drift through the turns. The Maxxis High Rollers worked well for this because they bit in nicely when I weighted them, but had very controllable edges for drifting.

Tight singletrack is where the Vagrant really found its home. I can see why this bike would excel in the dense forests of the Northwest where the dirt is a bit tackier and not so rock infested.

Overall this bike may be tougher than B.A. Baracus from the A-Team due to its ability to take large drops and slam off everything in its way without showing a sign of backing off. But much like B.A.'s fear of flying, the Vagrant had a few weaknesses that became apparent over time as well. The Vagrant is still a jack-of-all-trades: it can be ridden on your local XC loop, most DH trails, ridden around the city, and taken to the local jump trails. But, if your ideal riding spot is in the trees on twisting singletrack covered in drops and ladder bridges, this bike is truly for you.



Manitou's quick release 20mm thru axle gives tool-free wheel removal—thanks, Travis!



Collars and a thick gusset around the 1.5" head tube.



Transition's own Revolution wheelset, with SRAM's X-7 drivetrain.