

TRANSITION TR500

Ride Me Down

Words Drew Rohde | Photos Dennis Yuroshek

THERE ARE FEW BRANDS STILL OUT THERE THAT HOLD TRUE TO WHAT WE BELIEVE MOUNTAIN BIKING IS AND MOUNTAIN BIKERS SHOULD BE. AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE REBELLIOUS, RAW AND RIDER-OWNED BUSINESS MODEL ARE THE GUYS FROM TRANSITION BIKES. THESE HIGHLY PASSIONATE AND NOT-TOO-SERIOUS INDIVIDUALS POKE FUN AT INDUSTRY STANDARDS, TRENDS AND MARKETING, ALL WHILE PRODUCING AFFORDABLE BIKES THAT PERFORM PRETTY DAMN WELL. WE SPENT SOME TIME BUILDING UP OUR TRANSITION TR 500 WITH A SRAM X01 DH KIT AND SOME FLASHY, AMERICAN-MADE WHEELS FROM ENVE COMPOSITES.

THE TECH

Hydroformed 6061 aluminum keeps the 500 affordable, stiff and reliable, all things Transition hold at the top of their list. The linkage driven frame is convertible in more ways than one: travel can be changed from 180 to 203 mm, the bike will accommodate both 26 and 27.5-inch wheels, a seat stay chip can be flipped to change head angle and bottom bracket height, and lastly, a chip in the rear wheel dropout allows riders using 26-inch wheels to customize their chainstay length from 434 to 442 mm.

The 180 mm mode gives the bike tighter, park-type geometry and in our experience, worked well for a majority of North American downhill and bike park trails. In the 203 mm, long DH mode the TR 500 had a 63-degree head angle, 72.6-degree seat tube angle, and 13.8-inch bottom bracket height. Keeping in tune with Transition's long and low numbers, our large test bike had a 23.97-inch top tube, or more importantly, a long 16.49-inch reach. The 17.4-inch chainstays worked with the long front end to keep the wheelbase just under 47.5 inches.

While many things have changed in Transition's line, the 500 employs a link-driven single pivot design. A short link connects the one-piece rear end to the forged link that sits neatly between the split seat tube. Although it is still a single pivot design, Transition has slightly altered the kinematics, which change the feel of the suspension quite noticeably. The new design offers a much smoother, more consistent feel with a subtle ramp up towards the end of the stroke.



THE BUILD

Transition offers the 500 in three build kits starting out at \$5,299 as well as a frameset for \$2,599. We opted for the frameset. Along with the frame, Transition sent us some of their latest components from their Anvi brand. These in-house components proved to be affordable, good-looking and robust. Much like their bikes. The drivetrain was procured from SRAM and the X01 DH group showed up with a pair of Rock Shox squishers. A Charger equipped Boxxer World Cup got hung off the front and we put the Vivid R2C Coil between the split seat tube. With the money we figured a customer could save on the affordable frame, we opted to splurge on a set of Enve M90 wheels. Keeping those wheels from the jagged ground below were some sticky Schwalbe Magic Marys.

THE RIDE

After only looking at the TR500, our riders noted the long, slack stance and what they predicted the ride would be like. As soon we put both feet on the pedals and let off the brakes our expectations were confirmed as the 500 handily made light work of our test tracks.

Some bikes require a lot of rider input to perform best, this is not the case here. We don't mean for this to sound negative in any way but the bike is so relaxed that riders could almost completely relax and be lazy while piloting this bike down the mountain. When it came to timed sections or race-pace runs, the bike only did better. The more you gave it the better it responded. It was nice to find a bike that didn't require tons of muscling or rider management. The bike's long wheelbase, front-center and slightly heavier weight (compared to the latest carbon bank account killers) did require a bit more timing and effort to manual easily or lift over small obstacles, but that's fine. We all need to get a bit stronger anyways. It'll help us carry around a heavier wallet thanks to all the money the TR could save you.

This bike cornered with the best of them. Long and low, we were able to feel secure as we picked our heads up and looked ahead and around corners into the next section of trail. Knowing that our long-legged steed wouldn't hang up. The bike also excelled in really rough stair-steppy type rocks. The Boxxer World Cup and Vivid worked very well together

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and made light work of all the chunks. The X01 DH group worked great too and we really enjoyed the tight range of the DH cassette. Our only complaint, oddly enough, came from the brakes. It's not what you think! The brakes worked quite well actually and the performance and consistency were leaps and bounds over previous models. Our quails came from the lever. The biggest issue we had was the inconsistency of the reach adjusters. One felt extremely loose when we turned it, bordering on fragile. We hoped it wouldn't just fall out on the rough stuff. Conversely the other lever was impossible to move by hand.

OVERALL

We've said it before, Transition has their grasp on the jugular vein of the mountain bike scene and they truly live what they peddle. Bitchin bikes built for riding mountains. I hope that all the new bikes and publicity won't lead to the pitfall of price-jack and the great value of their products goes away. To me one of the biggest parts about being a rider-owned company is the ability to understand a customer's budget. The TR 500 is a sleek yet sturdy bike. It blends sexy curves with a raw industrial feel and the performance is there to match. It may be a couple pounds heavier than the latest carbon dream machines, but the value is there and your bank account will also remain a couple pounds heavier. This bike feels at home on very steep, chunky terrain and as speeds increase the length and slack geo will never leave you feeling insecure. The suspension on the TR 500 is a bit less rampy than the 450, which is good and bad. It requires a bit more shock tuning if you're doing a lot of dropping or jumping, but for all-out DH performance the bike is a big step up in sensitivity and usable travel.

Transition has delivered again. It seems these guys have been on fire this year. It goes to show the passion and motivation of a small rider-owned company can really go a long ways in a world full of big budget marketing. 🍷



CHASSIS

FRAME: Hydroformed Aluminum
FORK: Rock Shox Boxxer WC; 203 mm
SHOCK: Rock Shox Vivid R2C

COCKPIT

BRAKES: SRAM Guide
HANDLEBAR: Anvl Mandrel; 800 mm
HEADSET: Cane Creek 40
SADDLE: Anvl Forge
SEATPOST: Intense Alloy; 31.6
SHIFTERS: SRAM X01 DH; 7s
STEM: Anvl ARC; 45-50 mm

WHEELS

HUBS: DT Swiss 240
RIMS: Enve 90
TIRES: Schwalbe Magic Mary; 2.35"

DRIVETRAIN

BOTTOM BRACKET: SRAM Threaded
CASSETTE: SRAM X01 DH; 10-24t
CRANKS: SRAM X01 DH; 36
DERAILLEUR: SRAM X01 DH; 7s
PEDALS: Anvl Alloy

Price: Frame starting at \$2,599,
Completes starting at \$5,299;
Weight: 37.8-lbs;
Sizes: S, M, L(Tested), XL;
Country of Origin: Taiwan;
Contact: transitionbikes.com

