


# TITUS: Head to head


## THE NEW RACER X 26er VERSUS THE NEW RACER X 29er

**T**itus hails from Arizona USA. Their flagship trail/race bike, the Racer X, comes in seven sizes (plus custom options) and offers titanium, Exogrid titanium or alu front ends. The new 26in wheel model has a part carbon back end for extra rigidity and less weight, and now there's a new 29er on the market, too. We also spied a full carbon-framed model in the US a while back, as well.

With that in mind, we thought it would be interesting to put the 26er against the 29er in a head-to-head test. Is the big wheeler frame simply made for bigger riders or is there a little more to it than that?



The frame may be slightly different, but the RP23 shock remains



The 29er frame was built simply because enough riders asked for it

## TITUS RACER X ALU 29er

£2,900 (approx)

**T**he 29er version of the Racer X was made because riders asked Titus to make it. Simple as that... ask and ye shall receive. The principal design goal was to retain most of the essential personality of the 26in wheeled version, but this meant more than just long chain stays for the bigger wheel.

Titus adjusted the geometry to keep the handling lively and used beefier box-section chainstays to reproduce the stiffness of the 26er. Our test bike had alu seat stays, but importers Fat Tread Bikes say later samples will have carbon stays like the 26er. Titus know that taller riders can benefit most from big wheelers so they don't build the 29er in the smaller sizes – although if someone insists they're quite happy to build a custom one for them.

The four bar linkage frame, which has the same carbon clevis link as on the 26er, is accurate in tracking, very efficient in power transfer and has the constantly plush ride that characterises the best Horst Link (you'll find that the swingarm link on the chainstays rather than the seat stays) frames.

You can stiffen or soften the effects of aggressive pedalling and weight shifts via the Fox Float RP23 shock's Pro Pedal

damping lever. Finishing detail is the same as on the 26er but, as usual for a 29in wheeled bike, the wheelbase is slightly longer, the head angle is a degree steeper and the bottom bracket centre is below the wheel axle centres. These three characteristics make it a very different bike to ride.

### The Detail

The weight of our test bike was 27.5lb, 2lb more than the 26er Racer X. While it's fair to say that there is a little more metal in the frame, most of that extra weight is purely down to a heavier wheelset, tyres and fork. The spec details are pretty similar to the 26er – if a little less weight sensitive – and the price of the complete bike, £2900, works out at about the same as the 26er.

### The Ride


To make space for bigger wheels without changing the design principles of the frame, the Racer X 29er has about 25mm less suspension than the 26er. You wouldn't guess that when you ride it though, as the big wheels make for a smoother ride than on the 26er because they roll better over the sharp edges of bumps and dips. The less choppy ride

also meant that, despite a sub 13in static bottom bracket height, we never hit the pedals on rocks and roots through the corners – which is something we experienced several times on the 26er.

Speed wise, although the 29er is harder work to accelerate out of corners and a bit less animated on climbs and in tight twists and turns, it's easier to maintain momentum once you're up to speed. You'll find yourself braking less into corners, and the smooth-rolling ride is a joy through flowing singletrack.

Traction is slightly better too, because there's more tyre on the ground, and there's an extra feeling of stability because the bottom bracket is below the wheel centres and because big wheels are inherently more stable at speed than smaller ones.

So, conclusions? The taller and heavier you are then the more you will appreciate the 29er Racer X over the 26er. If you're shorter than 5ft 10ish then you'll probably be better off with the slightly lighter 26er.



There's a RockShox Reba 80mm fork fitted to this frame, which is a wise choice

At just 5.5lbs, the Titus Racer X 26er is an incredibly light frame



## TITUS RACER X 26er

£2,900 (approx)

Tipping the scales at almost exactly 5.5lb (including the Fox shock), the Horst Link four bar Racer X in its 26er format is one of the lightest full sus frames we've tested. It's the ideal XC race or high speed trail bike, but it takes a few rides to get accustomed to its lively handling.

Titus's attention to the fine detail of frame design is superb. The three smallest Racer X frames are designed for 80mm travel forks and the four largest for 100mm forks, with the one in the middle available for both – so the choice is down to you. Frames that are made for 26in wheels offer 100mm of travel out back but the geometry varies to suit body shape differences for different height riders. For example, you'll find that top tube lengths range from 20in to 24.6in.

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Four sealed bearings in the main pivot help to prolong durability and also help to keep the suspension action super plush, but Fox's Pro Pedal equipped shock stops any undesirable bobbing during climbs or sprints. The shock is pushed by a carbon composite clevis link rocker at the top of the carbon seat stays. The swingarm pivots almost dead level with the granny ring chain line and the resulting suspension action is both pedal-efficient and bump-efficient in any gear combination.

Tyre clearance is slightly better on the 26er than on the 29er and there's enough frame tube reinforcement to add bigger hit confidence to the thrill of the bike's light and lively feel. The new triple butted and radically ovalised hydroformed down tube is a structural highlight, but the common sense lesser detailing in the frame is also worth mentioning, too. There's loads of standover clearance, the Allen key seat clamp faces forward out of the spray, there's a single set of bottle cage bosses and all the cable/hose routing is tidy.

### The Detail

You can choose whatever componentry you like with the Racer X frame. Our test bike came equipped with a very light DT Swiss wheelset shod with Kenda's fast and grippy Kharisma treads, a drivetrain mix of SRAM X9 and Shimano XT, Magura Marta brakes and MAXM stem, bars, seat post and saddle. You couldn't go much lighter for this sort of money.

### The Ride

The Racer X geometry is a fairly lively 71 degrees at the head and 73 at the seat. A low bottom bracket boosts stability when you're flying through the singletrack, but also causes an occasional pedal to ground strike if you're power-peddalling with a little too much exuberance through bumpy twists and turns at the same time as the suspension compresses.

Despite an extra 25mm of suspension travel over and above the 29er, the ride is slightly more choppy over rougher terrain due to the fact that the wheels drop into dips more readily than the bigger wheels. But overall it feels faster, in part because of the lower weight and in part because 26in wheels will accelerate slightly faster than 29ers.

The low weight and the efficient suspension make it a very fast climbing bike, too. With the suspension set fairly soft at both ends it only feels challenged on rough descents if the terrain gets really steep and the handling starts to feel a little too nervous. The smoother rolling wheels and slightly more stable handling of the 29er can deal with rougher, steeper descents better, though.



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