

SURLY KRAMPUS

Price: £1699 complete. Frame and fork £649.99

Weight: 13.2kg (29.4lb) without pedals

Sizes: S, M, L, XL (Medium tested)

Frame and fork: 4130 chrome-moly steel

Wheels: Surly Rabbit Hole 622x50mm rims, Surly front hub, Shimano rear hub, Surly Knard 29x3in tyres

Transmission: Shimano SLX cranks, Salsa 34T chainring, Shimano SLX 12-36 cassette and shifter. 10-speed, 29-88in

Braking: Avid BB7 cable disc

Steering and Seating: Surly grips, Salsa Whammy 780mm 11° bar, Kalloy stem, Velo saddle, Kalloy seatpost

Contact: surlybikes.com and ison-distribution.com

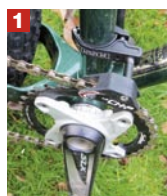
MOUNTAIN BIKE, £1699

SURLY KRAMPUS

Surly's new '29+' mountain bike is more than just a fat-tired head turner, as journalist **Steve Worland** discovers

▶ **MOST RIDERS** know that, with a modicum of skill, almost any bike can be ridden almost anywhere. But if a mountain bike had been designed from scratch rather than having gradually evolved, how might it have looked? How big might the wheels and tyres have been? How much suspension might it have had?

The Surly Krampus threatens to answer such questions without high tech materials or several inches of suspension. It's a 29er MTB with big enough clearances to run Surly's 50mm-wide Rabbit Hole rims and Knard 3in tyres, which push the rolling



1 A double chainset will also fit. A triple will work only with standard 29in tyres

2 You can easily fit a singlespeed or hub-gear rear wheel. A rack will fit too

diameter out to 31in. While it may be obvious that such tyres, run at suitable pressures (about 15psi on most trails) are going to be comfy, grippy and shock absorbent, it's a surprise that there's so little drag. This is due to a combination of factors: big wheel momentum; the shallow 'angle of attack' on bumps; minimal tyre-knob squirm; and a relatively narrow (1.5in) tread print on hard ground.

'Fat bikes' evolved mainly for use on sand and snow. Most have had wider-rimmed 26in wheels with fatter tyres than those on the Krampus so they've required wider hubs and crank clearances. You can fit conventional cranks to the Krampus, with a single or double ring (front mech clearance excludes an inner ring with 3in tyres) and you can use either normal 29in wheels or Surly's wider 29+ options, fitted here. Rack, mudguard and bottle eyelets are included, while adjustable rear dropouts allow you to fit a derailleur, hub gear or single sprocket.

Fat-tired flyer

The Krampus shows that a relatively low-tech bike can be designed for rough trail riding. Small rocks and roots are swallowed by tyre squish

without the geometry disturbance of telescopic suspension. The treads hook up on all surfaces, wet or dry, and roll over all but the harshest ground with a plushness and traction that's inspiring. Comfort and control is as good as, and in some cases better than, a short-travel suspension bike, and is boosted by the stability of the long wheelbase. The 13kg heft is the only notable drag on climbs.

Because the size of the Knard tyres offers extra grip, comfort and confidence as you bank into corners, they also allow you to carry speed that could be alarming on other bikes. You end up using the brakes less too. This allows you to get extra advantage from the rolling momentum that comes with heavier rims and tyres, which add about 450g per wheel over and above an average 29er. You notice a little extra drag in initial acceleration, but you quickly make up for it elsewhere.

Also consider



1) Genesis Fortitude Adventure £1499.99 A Reynolds 725 big-wheeler with touring braze-ons and a Shimano Alfine 11-speed hub gear. genesishikes.co.uk



2) On-One Fatty £999.99 The cheapest fat bike on the market. Well equipped, with 4in tyres, 70mm rims, 135/170 hub spacing, 10 gears and hydraulic discs. on-one.co.uk