

Reviews Gear up

COMPONENTS, KIT, AND MEDIA SELECTED
AND REVIEWED BY BIKE JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

Put to the test

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Pros & cons

- + Ergonomic, especially for spinny pedallers
- + Fewer pedal strikes
- Expensive

Hope

Evo Crankset 155mm

Premium-quality aluminium cranks in a shorter length

£270 hopetech.com

Shorter cranks seem to be gaining momentum.

The late Mike Burrows was a fan; he wrote an article for *Cycle* about them in 2007. But unless you could shorten cranks yourself, like Mike, or have someone do it for you (such as highpath.co.uk), there wasn't much opportunity to try them.

I've had 165mm cranks on my road bike for several years and on my time trial bike forever. But now cranks under 165mm are readily available, too: witness this 155mm Hope Evo crankset. Just after I started testing it, Hope

announced a 135mm option!

Why go shorter? There's nothing magical about 165-175mm; penny farthing riders rode 125mm (five inches). Shorter has an obvious advantage off road, particularly with the lower bottom brackets people like now: fewer pedal strikes. Shorter cranks are also lighter and stiffer.

It's true that you have less leverage but you can maintain the same power output by spinning a smaller gear faster. (Hope recommends a chainring two teeth smaller for every 10mm reduction.) A higher cadence is

easier with short cranks because you're turning smaller circles, using less knee and hip bend. This initially felt odd, compared to the 165mm and 170mm cranks I'm used to. Then I largely forgot about it.

To maintain your leg extension you need to raise the saddle by the reduction in crank length – 15mm in this case. This lowers the handlebar relative to the saddle, which is more aero but less comfortable. Fortunately my MTB had a long enough steerer for me to raise the stem to compensate.

A higher saddle means it's harder to get a toe down – unless you have a dropper seatpost. A dropper post also means your centre of gravity isn't higher when the saddle is dropped, which it will be whenever c-of-g matters when mountain biking.

Like other lengths of Hope Evo cranks, these forged and CNC-machined 155mm ones are well made, with an oversized 30mm axle, precise tolerances and a neat bearing preload nut inboard of the left-hand crank. They can be specified to fit most bottom bracket widths and chainlines, and can be run with 104BCD or 64/104BCD spiders or spiderless.

The only real downside is the price: as well as the crankset (£270), you'll need a spiderless chainring (£55) and a bottom bracket that accepts Hope's 30mm axle. (Hope's threaded bottom bracket is £105.) The test crankset and 30t spiderless chainring weighed 602g, 180g less than the 170mm SRAM SX Eagle crankset that came off. ●

Dan Joyce

Other options



SRAM SX EAGLE CRANKSET £72

Like its higher-tier offerings, SRAM's entry-level off-road groupset, SX Eagle, is now available with cranks as short as 155mm. SRAM's road groupsets go down to 160mm. sram.com



JCOB ALLOY 24MM SHORT CRANKSET 145MM £323

A short-arm road crankset for 68mm bottom brackets. It comes with 53-39, 52-36 or 50-34 chainrings, or can be converted to 1x. Also available in 150 and 155mm. speedandcomfort.com

Verdict

For any mountain bike with a dropper, shorter cranks are a no-brainer for the ground clearance alone. In general, they give a more fluid pedalling action to shorter riders, those with knee or hip issues and anyone who likes to spin. Although expensive, these 155mm Hope Evos are stiff, light, well made and modular enough to fit most bike setups.

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