

First look

A versatile all-rounder with a comfortably upright ride and an up-to-date frame spec



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Tech spec**SPA CYCLES ROVE 725 2x10SPD DEORE HYDRAULIC**

Price: £1,695 (£1,545 at time of writing).

Sizes: XS, S, M (tested), L, XL.

Weight: 13.5kg (29.8lb).

Frame & fork:

Double-budded 725 frame and chrome-moly fork with fittings for disc brakes, mudguards, front and rear racks, top-tube bag, three bottles, two fork cages. Adjustable dropouts.

Wheels: 58-622 (29x2.3in) Teravail Ehline tubeless-ready tyres, Kinlin TL-29 eyeletted rims on Bitex BX211 thru-axle hubs, 32 spokes.

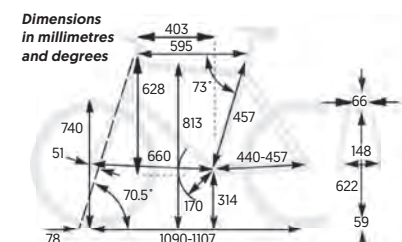
Transmission: No pedals supplied.

Shimano Deore FC-M4100 chainset with 36-26 chainrings, Shimano MT501 bottom bracket, KMC chain, Tifosi 11-36 cassette. Shimano Deore shifters and derailleurs. 20 ratios, 21-95in.

Braking: Shimano Deore hydraulic levers and callipers, 160mm rotors.

Steering & seating: Spa Cycles lock-on grips, 740mm FSA alloy handlebar, FSA Omega alloy stem. Spa Cycles Navigator saddle (Brooks C17 Cambium tested), 31.6mm FSA SL-281 seatpost.

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drivetrain, which can handle a 50-tooth low sprocket and, Shimano says, has dramatically increased durability. This version of the Rove uses Cues' well-loved spiritual ancestor, a 2x10 Shimano Deore setup. (A Cues option on the Rove adds £180 to the price.)

But the Rove has lighter, handbuilt wheels, with folding 2.3in Teravail Ehline tyres, versus the Surly's wire-beaded 2.4in WTB Trail Boss tyres on WTB quick-release wheels. The Bridge Club's front wheel alone weighs nearly 400g more. While the Tektro hydraulic brakes on the Bridge Club are fine, and better than most mechanical options, they feel like a budget choice compared with the more powerful and better-biting Deore brakes and Shimano Ice Tech rotors of the Rove.

Both bikes should winch you up almost anything. The Bridge Club's 1x drivetrain has a lower range: 18-82in versus 21-95in for the Rove, which will be a little better suited to road speeds. You could spec lower gears for the Rove (you'll need to liaise with Spa and pay the difference) but the existing rear



Top: The Rove's 44mm head tube can accommodate a tapered steerer



Bottom: Thru-axle fork (the carbon one) and Deore brakes

derailleur is limited to a 36-tooth large sprocket.

The test Rove came with a non-standard Brooks Cambium C17 all-weather saddle, so I can't comment on the standard Spa Cycles one. I really liked the Cambium but some friends who tried it, male and female, found it supremely uncomfortable. The Bridge Club's WTB Volt saddle was liked by all. Both handlebars were fine.

Ride

I enjoyed both bikes for just over two months this winter, using them for bikepacking on Marcher

Castles Way and the Woods Cyclery Rat Run route, which is in Dorset and Wiltshire. I also rode them on singletrack and lanes closer to home.

The Rove really stood out for me. It felt poised, comfortable and capable. Its tyres managed to be brisk on hard surfaces and grippy on soft ones, even stiff climbs on bumpy, wet grass. On road, its upright riding position was something of a revelation: the handlebar is more than two inches higher than the Bridge Club's. I looked for excuses to take it on errands, and on longer local