

DUEL: SUSPENSION FORK VS. SUSPENSION STEM

ROCKSHOX Rudy XPLR: weight 1.279 g, suspension travel 30mm, price 917 euro

VECNUM FreeQENCE: weight 291 g, suspension travel 30mm, price 299 euro



photo 1: © Max Fuchs

At first glance, the result of this duel seems to be clear: What can a suspension stem do against a real suspension fork? Even in the early years of mountain biking, the fragile suspension stems did not stand a chance against the long-travel suspension forks. With the parallel-guided Freeqence stem the modelers from the Allgäu approach the topic completely new and even get out the same suspension-travel as the gravel-suspension fork from Rockshox. The Rockshox Rudy is even available with up to 40 millimeters of travel. In terms of compatibility, the point goes to the stem, which is available in three lengths (90, 105, 120 millimeters) with a shaft clamping of 1-1/8 inch.

STEFAN LOIBL (Bike-Editor)

>> There is nothing to criticize about the funktion. The extra weight of more than 800 grams and the unfamiliar look don't agree with my idea of a gravel bike.<<

Because: Due to the larger installation length of 425 millimeters the suspension fork collides (shaft 1.5 to 1-1/8 inches) currently with the majority of frame geometries. Off the road, both concepts can convince and provide an Light bulb-moment compared to the stiff gravel bike. Bumps and shocks are compensated much better and kept away from rider's hands. This does not only increase comfort, but also significantly improves bike control. Since both systems provides the same travel and the air-suspended Rockshox fork compresses an elastomer additionally from half of the travel as well, both systems feel very similar to each other in direct comparison.

PETER NILGES (Test chief BIKE magazine)

>> Both systems respond sensitively and can effectively keep away vibrations from the rider. When riding out of the saddle the stem stays quieter and rides almost like a rigid stem.<<

CONCLUSION

Both the Rockshox Rudy suspension fork and the Vecnum stem noticeably increase riding comfort and thus provide more safety and less fatigue on rough trails. However, price, weight and compatibility clearly speak for the Vecnum stem, which is thus the smarter solution for the gravel bike.