

# ONTEST

#03

The latest bikes for taking off the beaten track



Gravel bikes could well be titanium's chance for a big comeback'

Kinesis Tripster ATR V3, p118



# KINESIS

## Tripster ATR V3

Titanium and gravel is a match made in heaven

Words **STU BOWERS**

It's incredible to think that the Tripster is already over a decade old. Kinesis launched it back in 2009 as a kind of do-it-all adventure-cum-tourer with an alloy frame, disc brakes and clearance for wider tyres. Basically it was a bike built with the idea of expanding cycling horizons beyond the tarmac a long time before anyone had coined the term 'gravel bike'.

Did Kinesis own a crystal ball? Who knows, but since then the Tripster has gone through several revisions, not least a transformation into titanium

(although an alloy version is still available). Rory Hitchens of UK distributor Upgrade Bikes says the Tripster ATR V3 has received a host of tweaks to fine-tune its performance. It also includes an all-new carbon fork with additional load-carrying capacity to make it more capable than ever.

### A little means a lot

'We take on board a lot of the feedback from our ambassadors and sponsored athletes,' says Hitchens. 'This bike's predecessor was a really highly regarded bike, so it has been more a case of ironing out a few small creases than making major alterations. For instance, we've slimmed down the chainstays to increase heel clearance.' Not a massive change, but appreciable nonetheless.

'We've aimed to gain a little more comfort in the new shape of the seatstays,' Hitchens adds. 'The top tube profile is more squared-off at the rear and flattened towards the front, increasing lateral stiffness for more accurate control when fully laden. Plus the internal cable routing has been improved.'

Many of the changes are almost invisible but one new feature that is undeniably eye-catching is the way the frame's logo has been applied. It's laser-etched into the titanium, then anodised to create the blue-purple 'oil-slick' effect, and from where I'm standing it looks really cool. It's ultimately the reason why this test bike has ended up with the spec it has.

The Tripster ATR V3 comes as frameset only, which meant I had carte blanche to choose its build kit. And given that Kinesis is a UK brand, I decided to continue on that theme, using as many home-grown products as possible. Hence the finishing kit, cranks, wheels and brakes were sourced from Lancashire firm Hope Technology.

Thanks to Hope's gamut of brightly anodised components, I could do justice to that shimmering logo and create a bike that was a nod to the early



Left: It's not often the logo is one of the most beautiful aspects of a frame but the laser-etched and anodised branding emblazoned on the Tripster is simply stunning as it catches the light

Far left: Shimano's GRX sub levers are an acquired taste, both physically and aesthetically, but they do add versatility





Left: One of titanium's best attributes is its durability. Superb resistance to impacts, abrasion and corrosion means you don't need to be overly careful about where you ride it

Bottom left: Hope's RX4 brakes add a dash of colour to the build, and the four-piston design, while slightly fiddly to set up, delivers really powerful and progressive braking

If it was one of your mates, the Tripster would be the one that doesn't take themselves too seriously but is still annoyingly capable at everything they turn their hand to.

The cold-drawn seamless 3Al/2.5V titanium tubeset delivers, as anticipated, a pleasingly well-damped core that copes admirably with the chatter of trails and bumpy gravel roads. This is further enhanced by tubeless 700x45mm WTB tyres and Lauf's Smoothie handlebars, which use a mix of carbon and glass fibres to absorb vibration.

On this build, the inclusion of Shimano's GRX sub brake levers, positioned on the tops of the bars, really helped a great deal to bolster my confidence to point the Tripster down steep chutes with my weight set far back. In this, the

performance, most obviously going uphill, and will likely put some people off, but it all comes back to that long-standing dispute between carbon and titanium as frame materials.

Carbon fulfils the needs of those who seek the lightest, raciest bikes, but titanium thrives on being incredibly tough, impact-resistant and, as undoubtedly proven here, beautiful in its raw state for a timeless look that will be the same in 10 years no matter what you drag it through. Put like that, titanium's assets are arguably much better aligned to gravel and adventure riding. I certainly didn't feel the need to wince every time a rock flicked up off the trail and pinged off the underside of the Tripster's down tube. I knew the titanium would laugh off those kinds of blows.

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Tripster offered up an amenable, versatile ride and I can confidently say it would be a likable companion no matter where your view of gravel riding falls on the spectrum.

### Big boned

The frame has a claimed weight of 1.88kg (56cm), which makes it close to a kilogram heavier than top-end carbon gravel frames right now, and means this bike weighs 9.86kg complete. I can't deny this is a detriment in some areas of its

Gravel bikes could well be titanium's chance for a big comeback. Most accept it will never keep up with the stiffness-to-weight ratio offered by carbon but the rough and tumble nature of riding off-road means there's a lot more to take into consideration. If you've been wondering what the ATR actually stands for, it's Adventure-Tour-Race, but I feel like All-Terrain-Rebel might be more fitting. Yes, the Tripster's titanium frame is nonconformist in the face of carbon's supreme reign, but there really isn't much this bike cannot do. ✨



▷ 1990s mountain bike era when this sort of look was all the rage. Trust me, like all fashions anodising will come back around.

### Master of all trades

Putting my aesthetic nostalgia aside, the Tripster epitomises what a gravel bike should be. During testing it became my go-to for a wide variety of riding. I did a short weekend tour, a century ride with a roughly 50/50 mix of road and gravel and countless blasts around my local trails. I even used it to tow the trailer for the school run.

Unlike a good number of gravel bikes, the Tripster doesn't fall obviously into any one niche, which almost by definition (or at least, the definition we have come to accept for gravel) means Kinesis has got the design spot on.

It has a utilitarian feel, robust enough to take on a round-the-world tour, yet its affable handling – a successful merger of geometry designed for stability and a short (90mm) stem to encourage more responsive steering – means it will happily Hoover up gravel miles, either lazily or at full tilt.



### THE SPEC

**Model** Kinesis Tripster ATR V3  
**Groupset** Shimano GRX Di2  
**Deviations** Hope RX4 brakes, Hope RX chainset  
**Wheels** Hope RD40 carbon  
**Finishing kit** Lauf Smoothie bars, Hope Zero Ninety stem, Hope Carbon seatpost, Selle Italia Flite Flow saddle, WTB Riddler 45mm tyres  
**Weight** 9.86kg  
**Price** £2,200 frameset, approx £5,975 as tested  
**Contact** kinesisbikes.co.uk