

MARIN

Muirwoods

 **£550****Stylish urban warrior
with a heart of steel****SPEC****FRAME**

Double Butted CrMo

GROUPSET

Shimano Altus 3 x 9-Speed

BRAKESShimano BR-M315
Hydraulic Disc**CHAINSET**SR Suntour XCR6,
48/36/26t**CASSETTE**Shimano
HG300 9-Speed, 12-36t**BARS**

Marin Alloy Flat Top Riser

STEM

Marin 3D Forged Alloy

SADDLE

Marin Fitness

SEATPOST

Marin Alloy

WHEELSDouble Wall,
Disc Specific, 32h**TYRES**

Schwalbe Citizen, 40c

CONTACT

marinbikes.com

**ABOUT THE BIKE**

Marin claim the Muirwoods is most at home in the concrete jungle, built for jumping kerbs or cutting through the park on the way to the shops or university campus. The classic commuter bike used by bike shop employees, it's essentially a steel mountain bike with slick tyres, but brought up to date with road bike-style 700c-diameter wheels. It certainly looks cool, but can it hang as tough as it claims in the big city?

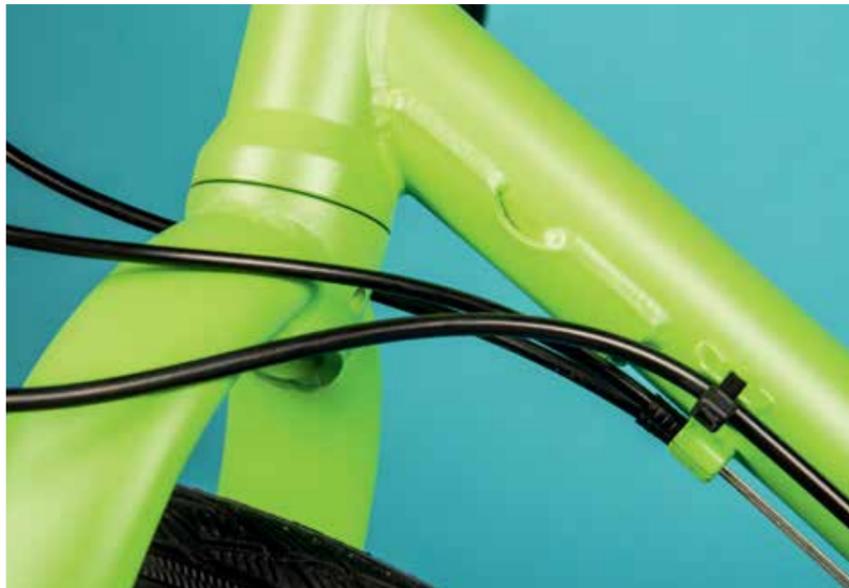
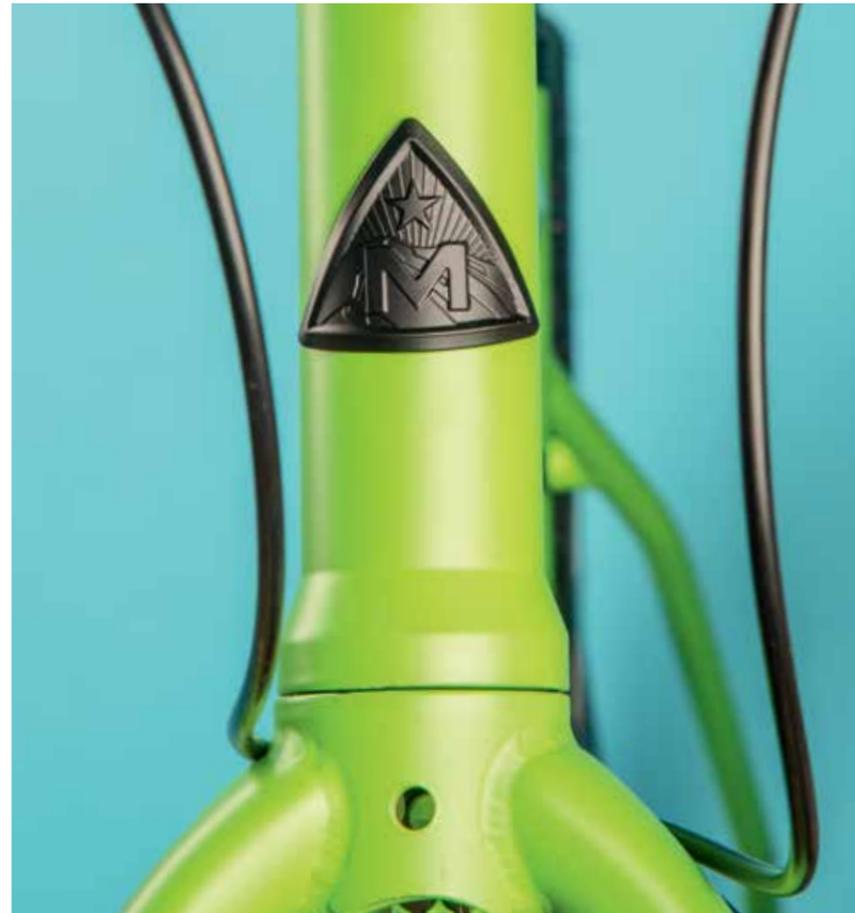
THE RIDE

First impressions Despite being steel, the Muirwoods isn't carrying too much excess weight. Low towards the front and with a long reach, it invites you to push it along at a fair lick. Yet a wide bar and stable geometry mean it's also happy to be wrenched about. Done up as a slick city commuter that'll also take on rougher tracks too, the Muirwoods is readily adaptable. With space for bigger tyres and geometry that's unlikely to get flustered no matter where you point it, we quickly found ourselves wondering what else it might be capable of.

On the road Practical but with a naughty streak, the Muirwoods will inject some fun into your daily trudge to work. Sporting puncture-resistant medium-width tyres, once rolling it's capable of steamrolling most things in its path. Although it offers relatively low drag, you could still speed it up by swapping the tyres for narrower treads, or switch to beast mode by fitting off-road knobbles. As it is, both the tough wheels and robust tyres are dependable and moderately quick. With a broad-ranging 12-36t cassette, and equally wide triple chainset, there's no chance of running out of gears, whether you're going up or coming down. The mix of Shimano Altus shifters and Alivio rear derailleurs works well, delivering the chain to each of its nine sprockets with an authoritative clunk. Even better are the Shimano brakes. With easily enough power to halt the bike in any situation, the controlled way in which they dole out their power makes locking up a wheel 

an unlikely event. Excellent parts bolted to a versatile frame make the Muirwoods a great commuter. Yet it's also up for touring trips, or with a switch of tyres even mountain biking, stretching its appeal well beyond the end of the working week.

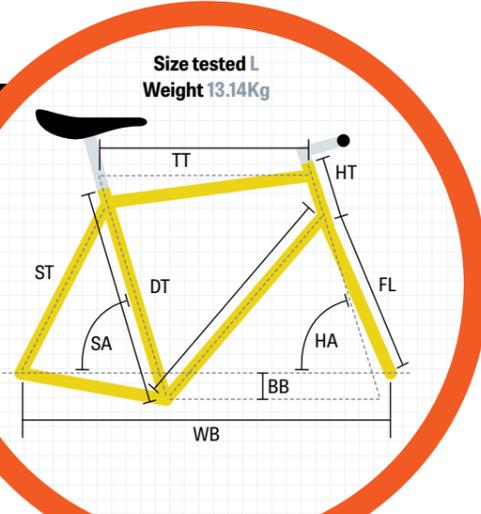
Handling With saddle and cockpit likely to end up level, the ride position on the Muirwoods is engaged rather than upright. Its comparatively low front end means putting some force behind your pedalling is worthwhile, even if the frame itself isn't mega stiff. Exhibiting just a smidgen of flex, the payoff is comfort. Although the difference is subtle, compared to most aluminium hybrids the Muirwoods is more compliant over chattery terrain. Welcome in any scenario, it's especially good when riding with the additional weight of panniers pushing the bike into the ground. Looking at the figures, despite a fairly conventional 72° head angle and standard-length wheelbase, this feels the most planted of all the bikes on test. We're chalking this up to a combination of the long top tube, short 70mm stem, and exemplary standover height. Directing the bike's course, the very wide bars also inspire confidence and encourage



reckless behaviour. Some may even find them overkill for the city and want to chop them down, but we'd leave them as they are.

THE SPEC

The frame Unique among our test fleet in being made of steel, the Muirwoods does without any of the fancy hydroforming seen on the aluminium bikes. Still, its simple ferrous frame is no less handsome or functional for being composed of regular tubing. Long and relatively low slung, chief among its design quirks are the dropped seatstays. Joining the seat tube well below the clamp, in theory they should allow a greater degree of flex and add some squish to the back of the bike. It's hard to say if it's this or the double-butted tubing, but the Muirwoods is certainly comfy. Similarly neat is the head tube, which flares out at the top and bottom to accommodate the internal headset bearings. It's an assemblage that would look at home on a much pricier bike. The fork slotted



Size tested L
Weight 13.14Kg

GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured		Claimed	Measured
Top tube (TT)	605mm	600mm	Head angle (HA)	72°	72°
Seat tube (ST)	485mm	485mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73.5°
Fork length (FL)	N/A	425mm	Wheelbase (WB)	1086mm	1085mm
Head tube (HT)	133mm	133mm	BB drop (BB)	70mm	69mm



It's a great commuter, but can be adapted for touring or mountain biking, stretching its appeal beyond the working week

RATING

FRAME

Double-butted steel tubing provides extra comfort.

COMPONENTS

Solid mix of Shimano and Suntour. Big gear range.

WHEELS

Tough enough to handle off road riding with ease.

THE RIDE

Confidence inspiring in all scenarios? Absolutely!

OVERALL



through it has a broad arch to leave space for big tyres, even with mudguards squished in alongside. Happy to be loaded up, with mounts on its legs and dropouts there should be no difficulty in fitting any variety of front rack. Similarly, the neat tabs behind the seat cluster ensure the same for the back of the bike. Three sets of bottle cage mounts mean the Muirwoods is desert-expedition ready too. **Groupset** Shimano's Alivio rear derailleur is unlikely to set hearts racing, but it's a level up from that found on the similarly priced Specialized. With nine cogs at the back and a Suntour brand triple chainset up front, the range of gears is huge. However, to save cash the higher spec rear derailleur is mated to cheaper Altus shifters and front mech. This always feels like a bit of a

cheat. Still, the shifting is snappy enough. More exciting are the Shimano hydraulic brakes. Powerful, easily serviceable, and nice looking, fitted with matching 160mm rotors, the grab at the calliper is plentiful, while the action and fit of the lever is equally pleasing. **Finishing kit** The low and broad bar suited us, providing lots of stability, though riders looking to nip between traffic might wish to hacksaw it down a touch. The tacky grips, with a slightly knurled surface were also a hit. As was the saddle. Flat and moderately padded, we can see the majority of bottoms taking to it. Supporting it is a tough twin-bolt seatpost that's secure and makes adjusting the angle of the saddle easy. With lots of grip and scope for mucking about, the included

platform pedals reminded us of the sort you might find on a BMX bike. With an aggressive shape, but a forgiving plastic construction, your feet are unlikely to come off, and if they do your shins ought to remain in one piece. **Wheels** The relatively wide Schwalbe Citizen tyres find themselves among good company in this test. All are tough and relatively puncture-resistant. With reflective sidewalls and a Kevlar belt beneath the multi-terrain tread, the rubber on the Muirwoods is no exception. Spinning on conventional cup-and-cone bearings the standard quick-release hubs support a full complement of 32 spokes. A tough combo, they amp up the bike's ability to accommodate far more aggressive offroad use if required. 

BikesEtc
BEST IN TEST

MARIN
Muirwoods

Too fun for just the working week – the Marin is a commuter on which to escape the rat race

As a category it may be thought a little prosaic, but our hybrids all displayed big personalities. With tech from bike design's upper tiers now cropping up on everyday runarounds, each benefitted from hydraulic disc brakes, while some had also plundered other genres to include big MTB-style tyres, or touring-bike frame fixtures.

Out of the bunch, the Specialized was the most conventional. Upright, comfy, and with a great frame, it fits most people's idea of what a hybrid should be. With puncture-resistant tyres and ergonomic contact points, it's instantly easy to get along with. It was, however, somewhat out-gunned by the others on test in terms of its groupset.

Scoring similarly, the Raleigh throws a slight curveball by using 650b rims. Agile and fun to ride, we were surprised by how

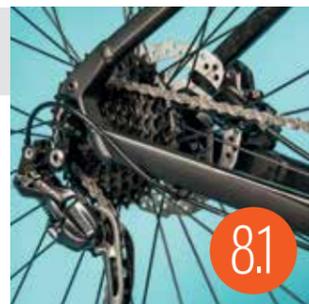


efficient its smaller wheels felt. With some of the best gearing components on test, we liked the simplicity of the single-chainring drivetrain, but felt it could have done with an easier lowest ratio for climbing big hills.

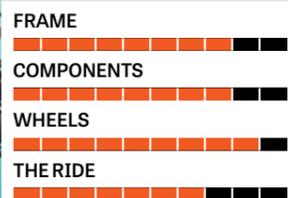
The pricier Cube needed to deliver more, and largely did. We appreciated the confident ride provided by the radically big tyres, along with the quality of the build kit and ace wheels. We'd have preferred more modern Shimano components, however.

Unencumbered by its heavier frame material, the steel Marin paid off in comfort and style. A good parts list, top tyres, and versatile design set up the geometry to push it over the line first. Fast, engaging, and modern it's more fun to commute on than seems appropriate, while excellent handling and off-road capabilities prove it offers something for the weekend, too!

HOW THEY STACK UP...



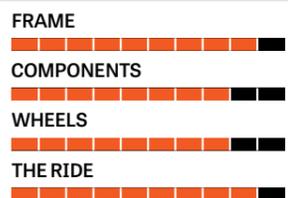
CUBE HYDE
£679



8.1



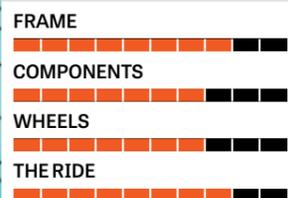
MARIN MUIRWOODS
£550



8.7



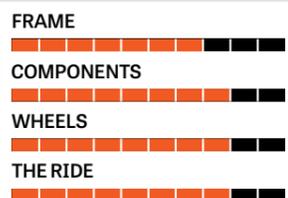
SPECIALIZED, SIRRUS DISC
£525



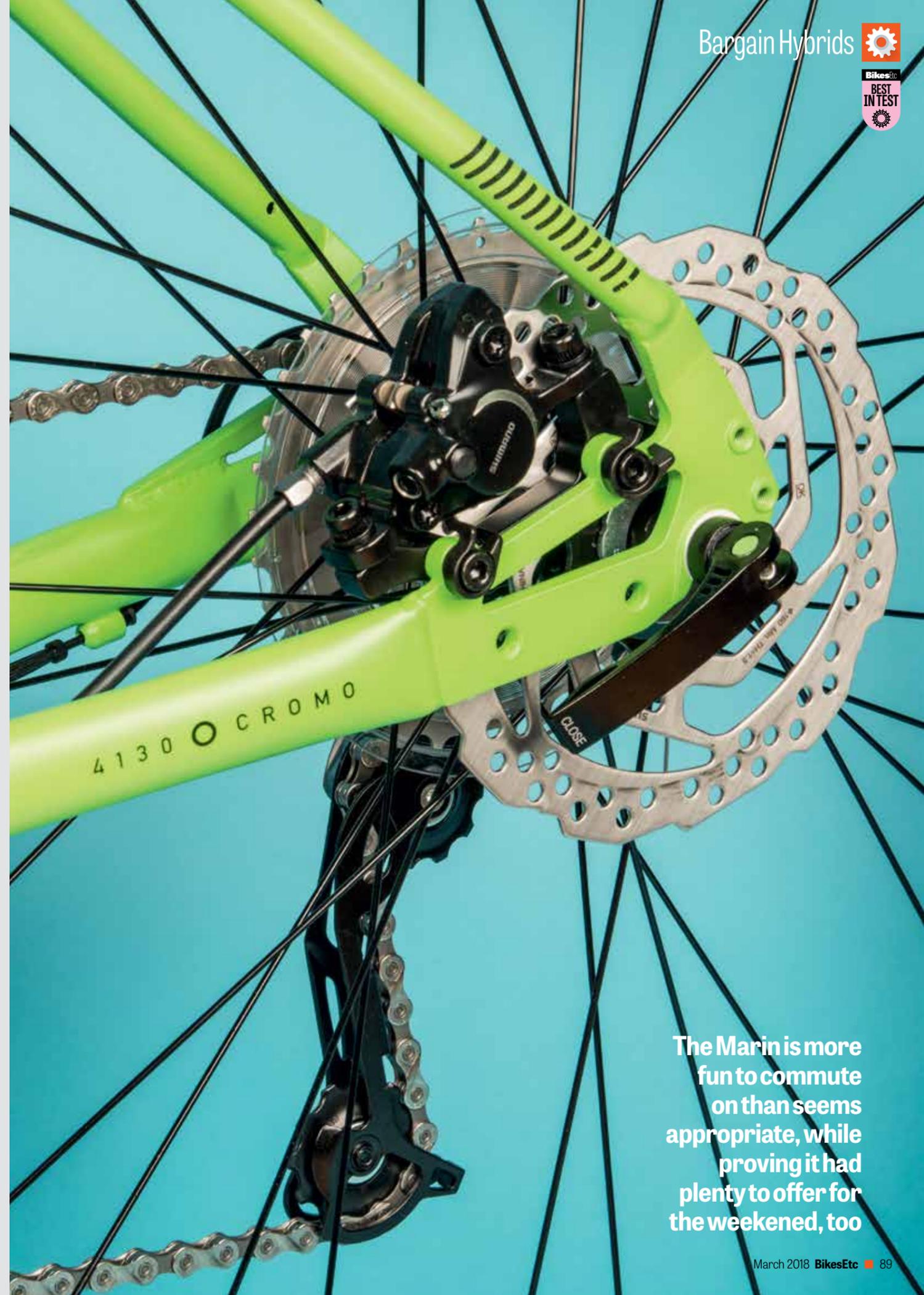
7.7



RALEIGH STRADA 5
£575



7.9



The Marin is more fun to commute on than seems appropriate, while proving it had plenty to offer for the weekend, too