

The New Suspension on The Block

Alter Cycles' Reflex 300 Bike Review

By San Luis Obispo based SLOcyclist.com



Alter Cycle's revolutionary design claims for a smooth ride and easier pedaling. Here's what we think about its performance.

ALTER CYCLE'S REFLEX 300 BIKE REVIEW

Whether you like to ride road, cruise around town, or ride on trails this bike will prove to be sturdy and enjoyable whatever you choose to do.

Some Quick Features: With the REFLEX 300 frame design, you're getting a bike that has refined new technology, which helps you ride comfortably and efficiently. The aircraft grade aluminum frame is partnered with the Rider Fit Tubes of varying stiffness. These Rider Fit Tubes take power from your downward pedal motion and place it in your upward motion to make pedaling more efficient. This flexibility absorbs bumps and eliminates the need for a heavy expensive shock on the front, which can be a total hassle to maintain.

We think this bike is perfect for riders who want to be able to go from commuting to trails without the need for much maintenance or a big investment. At under \$1k, riders who don't want, or can't afford multiple bikes will find this a sweet spot to satisfy their cravings for the trails, but also meet practical transportation needs with high power transfer.

COOL FEATURES

A cool feature that comes along with this bike is that you are able to switch out the Rider Fit Tubes to better fit you and what performance level you desire—available in a variety of colors.

Alter's ARC technology is significant because it builds in a higher performance than you might expect for bikes in this price range. Active frame construction means that the bike actually coils and flexes with your pedaling motion to store and release power when needed.

I know this may sound like marketing hype, but the claims are actually true. This bike almost seems to push you up the climbs. I definitely found it much easier to attack the hills while riding—making it much less of a negative with a 9-gear cassette (Alter's other models do come with more gearing options).

In addition, the customizable Rider Fit system, which quickly swaps out tubes, lets you achieve the comfort/power ratio that fits your riding style using the ST Quick Connect System.

The model I tested featured the #2 flex; although, we are also testing another Alter Cycle model with a #1 Tube. The difference in flex is quite noticeable between the numbers, with the #1 feeling a little smoother off-road. Strangely, although you can tell the difference in the ride between Tubes, the flex isn't so noticeable that you feel the frame is unstable. In fact, it's almost as if the bike works with your pedal stroke and your movements, so there isn't any loss in control.

For a better visual on the technology in use, check out Alter Cycle's video at altercycles.com.

I have to say that Alter Cycles' Reflex 300 technology is the best thing I have seen yet and the most effective alternative form of shock absorption I've ever tried. It held up to everything I put it up to. If you are looking for something new and capable this is the bike for you! After getting this, it's smooth and fast riding from here on out.

Part 2 - All Terrains – Here's How It Stacks Up

I've been riding Alter Cycles' Reflex 300 for a couple of months, and I've tested it on-road and off-road.

As I said, over the past couple of months I have taken this bike on many, many rides and can name pretty much every pro and con. Here's how it handled every terrain from mountain to road to commuting and gravel.

HOW IT HANDLES AS A MOUNTAIN BIK

First things first, with its provided setup, this bike is intended for mostly asphalt riding with minimal off-roading. However, some knobby tires swapped in definitely makes for more of a shredding beast.

Being a mountain biking type of guy, I was adrenalized to hear it was a "multi-purpose" type of bike. The idea of the curve is to help conserve energy while pedaling. With regular suspension you lose energy in the shocks when you pedal. This idea of the arc works phenomenally to store and release that propulsion.

I took this bike on a variety of terrain from gravel/dirt roads to small jumps and even around an entire mountain. It handled pretty well on dirt and gravel roads. It also did decently well at small jumps.

Now when it comes to absorbing shocks off-road, it is not at the top of its game. In comparison to a traditional full-suspension mountain bike, it failed to really smooth out the dirt. The trail I rode combined with this bike equaled an extremely bouncy ride, and slower one at that. I can normally ride this route in about an hour and a half. On the flex frame it took me two hours and fifteen minutes. Other than some jolting, though, it was adequate to finish the trail in a decent amount of time.

HOW IT HANDLES ON THE ROAD

Now this is definitely this bike's forte. The bike is great at getting up to speed quickly and maintaining that speed. Hills are my kryptonite. On my usual commuter, I suffer up most hills and gradual inclines. The flex frame almost blows these problems out of the water completely. The flex arc really works. And not just works, but excels at reducing energy expenditure. This alone is a great reason to purchase this bike.

A FEW NOTES

Overall, the ride here is pretty much top-notch if you're looking for a bike that can pull double-duty on-road and off. As far as cons go, the only ones are petty: the rubber on the hand grips slides, and the seat came loose after a hard mountain ride. Overall, some pretty small things.

One thing that would be great to see from Alter would be a fully high-end model that would shed some weight and dampen the bumps a little more with some carbon. Alter does offer a higher end bike, called the Reflex 500 (available in November), which moves you into the better Tiagra components as well as a carbon fork. At about \$400 difference, I think I'd go for the upgrade.

THE VERDICT

Over all this is an amazing bike. It handles semi-rough roads pretty well and excels at street cycling. The Reflex 300 is a must have for all cyclist at any level. You will not regret adding this steal of a bike to your collection.

Grab the Reflex 300 at your Local Bike Shop.