

INTO THE RIDE #96

Expanding the Alterra Line

by Randy Schlitter

The addition of the Alterra Road and Alterra trail bike has shown what levels you can push the crankforward idea and still have a comfortable, body-friendly bike. It has been a well-received geometry, warranting expansion of the line up. We began this by adding the 29er, which we discussed in [ITR #94](#). This bike is due to be on shop floors by spring and joining it will be three more bikes based off the Alterra concept.

Alterra Ti Road

The inspiration for the Alterra Ti Road comes from wanting a road bike with drop bars. In the past, our definition of road bike excluded the iconic drop bars. We tried drop bars on the Zenetik and failed to produce results that were production worthy. The cockpit reach was a bit too long. With the shorter reach of the Alterra, not only did stand-up riding become second nature, but using drop bars became possible. After a whole summer of riding a stock aluminum Alterra Road with drop bars and the Sram Rival groupo, I found the bike comfortable well beyond tradition. Due to the drop bars, the extra speed into the wind was nice and triple hand placement a great relief to tedium on long rides. Never trusting my own impressions, the bike was test rode by our in-house experts, several locals, and many more random cyclists at our 2010 RANS Rally. The bottom line was the combination of the Alterra frame geometry and drop bars was a good match.

The Alterra Ti Road has that ride titanium is famous for, along with quick handling, lively acceleration, and easy climb. That is not a bad line-up of traits for a bike that on top of all it has a comfort factor made for the long haul. The Alterra Ti Road frameset is built per order as a frameset only and requires about 3 to 4 weeks for delivery.



The Alterra Ti Road frameset can be ordered with S&S couplings for a top notch travel bike.

Alterra 700X

In rural Kansas one of the most enjoyable forms of cycling is taking the back roads. Out there you find a peace and quiet, and next-to-zero traffic. You have the road to yourself 90% of the time. Which is great, because the roads are either sand or chalk, so quite a bit of dust comes rolling over you when a car or truck passes. If you are lucky the cloud is downwind, if not, hold your breath, and squint! I used to ride my Zenetik Pro, and in fact for several years that prototype yellow bike and I was a regular site on the back roads. I thought the 23c 120 PSI tires were just fine, until I started testing our Dynamik 700X, and then later the Sequoia, set up with 700c cycle cross wheel and tires. With the road vibes noticeably subdued and the extra traction and surefooted feel of the cross tires, I was hooked! In the 700X configuration the Dynamik is a great ride, but the toe clearance could be bothersome. To widen it up meant a whole new frame.

Enter the Alterra Road. This frame geometry proved ideal, needing only a small tweak in the rear triangle to create tire clearance. Up front is our carbon cross fork, which sets at a somewhat-relaxed head angle providing easy reach. One thing about the new Alterra frames is that the feel in climb is exceptional. The large down tube, seat, and chain stays result in a rock solid feel in all the right places. Typically longer in wheel base, the frame is excellent in absorbing road shock, despite being aluminum. The Alterra 700X is a hybrid cross bike since it sports flat bars and disc brakes, but is well suited for cycle cross. It is a spirited performer on hard pavement, and a great bike for urban adventure. I can see the Alterra 700x in many roles due to the robust frame, strong braking, and overall efficient performance. 700X will be in your favorite bike shop this spring.



At home on the gravel and happy on pavement the Alterra 700X is utility with comfort and style

Mini

Compact bikes are the rage in the inner city. The simple reason is they can go places larger wheeled machines are either tight or can't. Places like up stairs, in elevators, trunks of cars, bus racks, you name it. The new Mini is a take-along bike. Based on the Alterra geometry the Mini sports a pair of 20" wheels, tough light, and rimmed with Primo Comets. For those who want a bigger tire, Minis can be fitted all the way up to Big Apples (2.4"). One other design intent of the Mini is to fit into the baggage compartment of one of our more popular aircraft models. It is a tight fit, but offers a much more solid bike over a folding unit. Being compact goes well beyond airplane use, per say into the car trunk. Just remove one or two wheels, seat, and bar and riser off the steer tube and it becomes a mini package.

Riding the Mini is reminiscent of 20x20 BMX and some adult bikes. However, the increase in wheel base affects a smoother ride. The lower seat height affects a sporty feel. The Mini is fun to corner and a lot of acceleration from complete stops (if you ever make those!). The Mini will be right at home in the densest traffic any metropolis has to offer.

The stock Mini comes in small, which has a 2" shorter seat tube than our standard crank forwards, meaning you add 2" to the inseam gauge. We plan to offer it with the standard seat tube length as well. The top tube and seat stays will be raised 2" higher to allow for more seat post extension. This also restores the inseam gauge to normal readings.

As an alternative to a folding bike, the Mini may be a less-compact package, but the ride feel and performance are worthy paybacks. Dressed up for an urban role with racks, bags, baskets, fenders, and lights, the bike will still be hard pressed to weigh much over thirty-two pounds. The stock bike starts out at 24 pounds. Frame sets will be available for those anxious to trick out this super fun unit. In your bike shop late March.



This compact potent performer is happy to go anywhere you are willing to take it, either riding or portage.

With a full line up of bikes based on the Alterra geometry, we are certain one will fulfill your needs and fast become your favorite ride. I think back to the many bikes I have owned over the years, many of

them quite light, beautiful, and fast. Not one was comfortable like our CrankForward bikes. I still ride (rarely) a now 37-year-old 10-speed. It is a reminder of what state of the art was, and more importantly, what I would put up with. Had the bikes of that era been comfy like our CrankForwards... well I guess I would have never found an opportunity in cycling. I respect that 37-year-old 10-speed for that! Until next month ride safe, and as always stay into the ride!

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