

## SPECIALIZED CAMBER EXPERT £1,899

The Camber is a completely new platform from Specialized for 2011 — sporting 120mm of travel from an M4 aluminium frame with a similar suspension layout to its Stumpjumper and Enduro stablemates. To make room for the new Camber family, the less expensive FSR XC platform has been dropped from the range.

### Frame

The Camber Expert is the second-to-top model of four; all offering the same hydroformed frame with the four-bar FSR suspension design Specialized is famous for. All models get an integrated headset, cable routing for a dropper seatpost, together with replaceable sealed bearing pivots. But there's no tapered head tube, BB30 or Maxle offered on the Camber — perhaps reflecting the fact that the range stretches down to a £1,250 entry-level model. One interesting point is that the Camber is the lightest bike on test by a fair margin, and that could be down to the more simple design of the frame. Specialized claims that the Camber's geometry is 'pitched towards the more playful side of XC trail', which actually translates to being like most of the bikes here excepting the even slacker head angle found on the Whyte T120S.

### Suspension

A custom Fox Triad three-position shock offers a complete lockout, Pro Pedal platform and a fully open setting. The lock-out is useful on sustained smooth climbs, but we rarely needed to use the middle climbing setting. Although we've had issues with Triad shocks before, this unit proved plenty durable, and can be replaced by a non-custom version if needed (unlike the Stumpjumper with its proprietary shock mounting).



### ANGLE FINDER

Head angle	Seat angle	BB height	Chainstay	Front centre	Wheelbase	Down tube
68.7°	70.4°	336mm	420mm	698mm	1,128mm	661mm

A Dual Air RockShox Reba TK fork, with independently adjustable positive and negative air springs, worked perfectly well once we got it set up to our satisfaction, but it doesn't match the performance of a Fit cartridge Fox unit.

### Components

The quality spec sheet is a mixed bag of Shimano and SRAM gear. Avid Elixir 5 brakes performed well (rotor sizes come tailored to frame size — 185/160mm on a medium). Smooth SLX shifters pull a cheap M660 front mech, but also a 10-speed low-profile XT Shadow rear mech. The crankset is a basic Shimano Deore M552 unit (also found on the 'Dale) and it isn't as stiff as Shimano's hollow-forged offerings. The lightweight wheels are DT Swiss 445D rims with alloy

### NEED TO KNOW

**FRAME:** M4 aluminium, Fox Specialized Triad II, 120mm

**FORK:** RockShox Reba Dual Air TK, 120mm

**SIZES:** S, M, L, XL

**WEIGHT:** 12.08kg (26.65lb)

**CONTACT:** [www.specialized.com](http://www.specialized.com)

nipples on own-brand hubs, with a 28-hole front, 32-hole rear rim/hub combo shaving precious grams. They feel fast and accelerate easily, but also exhibit a little bit of flex. A sensible 75mm stem and okay bars round out the package.

### Performance

The Camber is very versatile, and capable of tackling whatever the trail throws at it. It climbs super-fast, especially in lock-out mode, but it also pedals with real urgency on singletrack with the shock fully open. This is the kind of bike that urges you to pull manuals, grab air over every little bump on the trail, and flick it round corners like a demon. It feels a little like a go-kart — close to the ground, nimble and super-fast.

The FSR rear suspension only has one rival in this test for supreme control and support, and it's a very close call with the Ghost AMR as to which one is most effective in terms of plushness and tracking. The Camber Expert offers perfect balance and stacks of grip while offering that tight 120mm suspension feel that you can push against to pump hollows and edges, gaining speed from the trail.

One more thing to bear in mind: as the lightest bike here, one trade-off is that flex is detectable and it simply doesn't feel as beefy, or as solid as most of the others. Since we experienced no negatives in terms of how secure you feel at speed (and it accelerates fast because of it), this is a worthwhile balance overall.

### Verdict

The superb Specialized Camber Expert nicely fills the hole left by the old classic 120mm Stumpjumper, which moved up to 140mm of travel last year. Even as the cheapest bike on test by a full £100, this Expert model offers an excellent riding package. There are no obvious flaws in performance and the Camber really encourages you to have fun, which is what it's all about for us, even if some of the parts aren't the match of those fitted to the Ghost. As well as being a lightweight and quick bike the Camber Expert is also just as capable in the rough stuff as any other 120mm-travel machine out there.

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DT Swiss oversize quick release



FSR suspension was matched only by the Ghost