



ALL-CITY GORILLA MONSOON PROJECT BIKE

BY DAN MEYER

Editor's note: For most Road Tests, we get complete bikes from the manufacturer, usually in the same spec as what's on the showroom floor at your local bike shop. Product managers decide on that spec to fulfill certain needs and meet a certain price point, and while there are compromises, buying a complete bike is almost always a better value than piecing one together yourself.

→ I could have tested a complete All-City Cycles Gorilla Monsoon for this review, but no. In my gleeful stupidity, I thought it would be fun to test it with a very different spec — I had a vision of the Gorilla Monsoon as a modern all-road touring bike. So I very nicely asked All-City for a frameset, and then I sent out many, many more emails to various manufacturers asking for parts to bolt onto it. (For a while, I was under the grand delusion that I could build a better bike for nearly the same price as stock, choosing only components available to customers aftermarket and adding up their retail prices. This, I admit, was a fool's errand.)

The frameset arrived promptly, its bright orange fade paint nearly bursting through the handholds in the cardboard box. And there it sat, next to my desk, waiting for parts (and for spring). Thus began the saga of the All-City Gorilla Monsoon Project Bike.

ALL-CITY GORILLA MONSOON PROJECT BIKE

Price: \$2,635 (as tested; stock complete \$2,099; frameset \$850)
Sizes available: 46cm, 49cm, 52cm, 55cm, 58cm, 61cm
Size tested: 55cm
Weight: 25.1 lbs. (as tested)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

- **Stack:** 597mm
- **Reach:** 381mm
- **Head tube length:** 165mm
- **Head tube angle:** 71.5°
- **Seat tube:** 565mm
- **Seat tube angle:** 72.5°
- **Top tube:** 565mm
- **Chainstays:** 430mm
- **Bottom bracket drop:** 71.5mm
- **Fork Offset:** 47mm
- **Trail:** 70mm (with 2.4in. tires)
- **Wheelbase:** 1030.9mm
- **Standover height:** 817.5mm (with 2.4in. tires)

SPECIFICATIONS

- **Frame:** 612 Select double-butted chromoly steel, rack and fender mounts, three bottle mounts, replaceable derailleur hanger
- **Fork:** 4130 chromoly steel, lugged crown, rack and fender mounts
- **Handlebar:** FSA Adventure Compact, 460mm
- **Stem:** FSA Gossamer, 90mm
- **Brake/Shift levers:** microSHIFT Advent



- **Rear Derailer:** MicroSHIFT Advent, clutch
- **Brakes:** TRP Hy/Rd mechanically actuated hydraulic disc
- **Rotors:** Shimano XT Center Lock, 160mm
- **Crankset:** Shimano SLX, 175mm
- **Chainring:** Shimano SLX, 34T
- **Cassette:** MicroSHIFT Advent 9spd, 11-42T
- **Chain:** SRAM 9spd
- **Bottom bracket:** Shimano XTR, threaded
- **Seatpost:** FSA Afterburner
- **Saddle:** WTB Volt
- **Headset:** Cane Creek 40
- **Hubs:** Shimano XT, 100 x 15mm front, 142 x 12mm rear, thru-axles
- **Rims:** Shimano XT, 28h
- **Tires:** Panaracer Gravel King 650b x 48mm

GEARING RANGE

	34
11	83.2
13	70.6
15	61.1
18	50.9
21	43.6
24	38.2
28	32.6
34	26.9
42	21.8

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THE CLASSIC AND THE MODERN

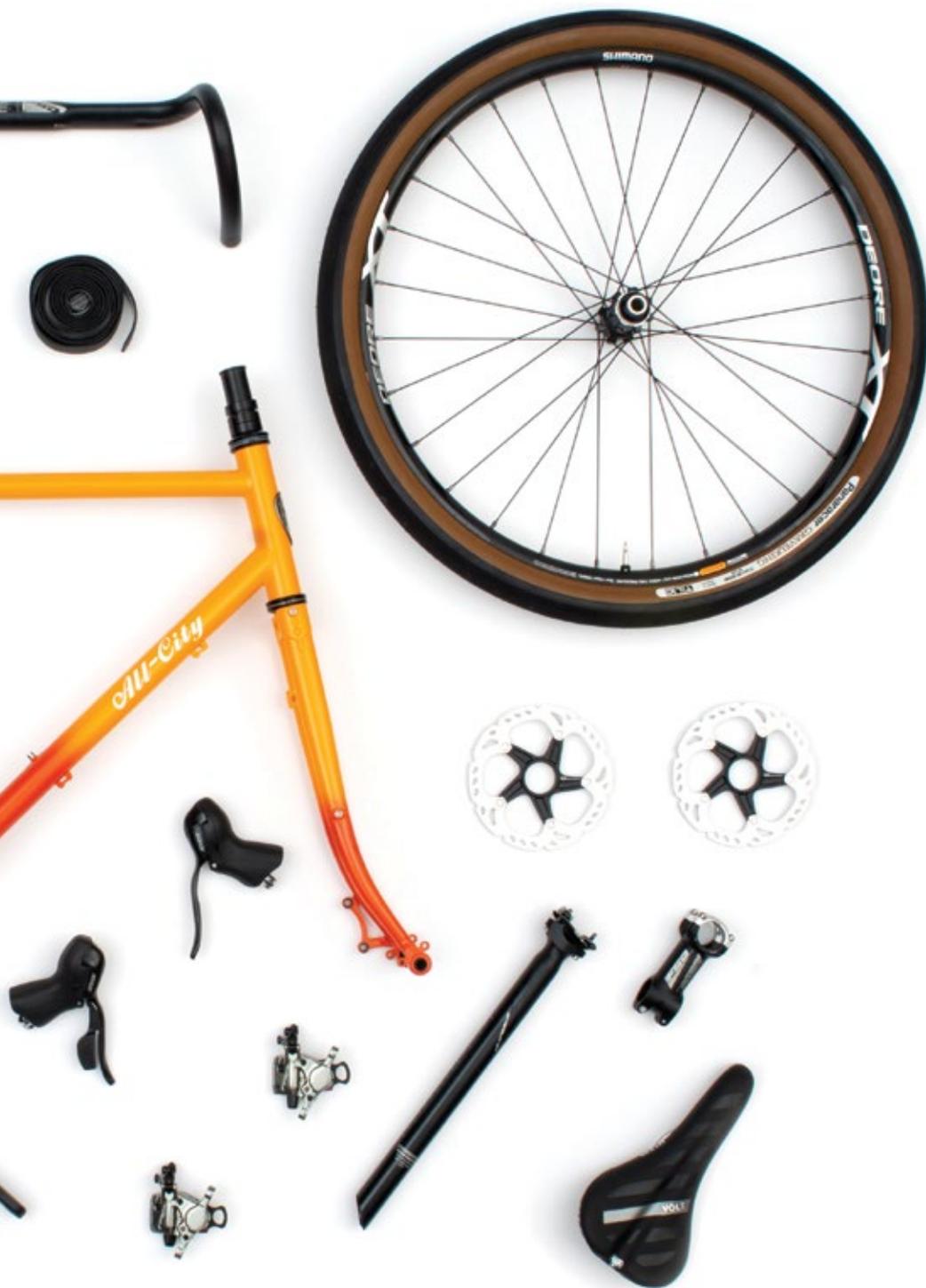
As spec'd from All-City — the QBP brand known for its tastefully appointed steel bikes — the Gorilla Monsoon is a do-anything, dirt-focused dropbar bike. It may have the silhouette of a road bike, but its slack angles, low bottom bracket, and big rubber place it squarely in the mountain bike category. Indeed, photos and user reviews online show that Gorilla owners are using their bikes for everything from commuting and road riding to bikepacking and singletrack mountain biking. It seems that All-City has created quite a versatile platform with the Gorilla Monsoon. (Gorilla Monsoon was the ring name of a professional wrestler whose real name was Robert Marella. He once body slammed Muhammed Ali.)

The Gorilla Monsoon is a unique bike, and it happens to match nicely with my unique form of bicycle snobbishness. Specifically, I like bikes that have classic looks but sport modern features, and the Gorilla is a perfect example. It's got curves in the chainstays, an elegant bend in the fork, a beautifully lugged fork crown, and lovely dropouts — on a frame with disc brakes, thru-axles, and tons of tire clearance.

And they didn't skimp on the details. The Gorilla has braze-ons for full-length housing, three bottle mounts, rack and fender mounts, and even stealth dropper post routing. Bike makers after my own heart, these All-City people.

BUILDING THE GORILLA

Shimano graciously loaned me a set of XT wheels, XT brake rotors, an XTR bottom bracket, and an SLX crank and chainring. With 28 straight-pull spokes, the XT wheels seem a little light duty for a touring bike, but after some hard miles, they still spin smooth and true. My one complaint about them is that the rims are a bit narrow.





The frameset used in this review was a 2018 model. The 2019 Gorilla Monsoon comes in a new green fade color, and the complete parts spec is the same as 2018 with the exception of an included dropper post.

The stock Gorilla arrives with 2.4in. knobbies, but to make it more of an all-road bike, I chose 650b x 48mm Panaracer Gravel Kings set up tubeless (the XT wheels arrived taped and with tubeless valves installed). With a 71.5mm bottom bracket drop, the Gorilla Monsoon already has a fairly low bottom bracket, but with

smaller rubber (All-City cites 47mm as the smallest it recommends), I can practically drag my heels on the road.

Likewise, All-City specs Hayes CX mechanical discs on the Gorilla, brakes that have received a rating of “adequate” in past Road Tests. But I wanted more power, and it just so happened that I had yet to try out TRP’s interesting hybrid

Hy/Rd. The Hy/Rd brakes are unusual in that they use a cable to actuate a hydraulic master cylinder located at the brake caliper.

Depending on whom you ask, the Hy/Rd brakes combine either the best of both worlds or the worst. I’m leaning toward the former. Getting the proper cable tension was a little finicky, but once I got there, the Hy/Rd brakes proved to be very powerful and reliable stoppers. I think they make the most sense for a rider who wants to upgrade their mechanical discs to hydraulic, but doesn’t want to plunk down the extra coin for hydraulic brifters.

For the cockpit, FSA sent me a Gossamer stem and an Adventure Compact handlebar, both components with their sights set on value. But the Adventure handlebar was a pleasant surprise. It’s nothing special, just an alloy bar with a short drop and reach, a moderate flare, and flattened tops. But, wrapped in FSA’s Powertouch tape, the Adventure is the comfiest dropbar I’ve ever used. And it’s only \$40.

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Another sign that the Gorilla Monsoon isn't your usual dropbar rig is its 1x-only designation, which road-focused cyclists may scoff at. But with a wide-range cassette, it's easy enough to adjust the gearing range to suit your conditions by swapping out the chainring. Got hills? Go smaller. Live in the plains? Go taller. I ran a 34T ring, which gave me a low enough gear for grinding up fire roads without spinning out too soon on the macadam.

For this project bike's drivetrain, I went big on value. While I was futilely waiting for another drivetrain to arrive, Microshift's Advent appeared. Marketed mainly for mountain bikes, Advent is a 9-speed 1x drivetrain with a clutched rear derailleur and a wide-range 11-42T cassette. And it's so, so inexpensive. Cassette? \$40. Derailleur? \$60. Brifters? \$140. Finish the group with any 9-speed chain and narrow-wide chainring. Find me a better deal than that. Go ahead. I'll wait.

After a tedious install (don't get me started), the Advent set shifted well and proved to be reliable, with one little hangup: the shifting got hung up as the cable's barrel end would interfere with the inside of the shifter in a certain gear. I'll address this in more detail in an upcoming standalone review.

As a bonus, Specialized sent me their Pizza Rack and Pizza Bag to make the All-City Gorilla Monsoon Project Bike a kind of pseudo-randonneur bike. They were a great pairing for commutes, running errands, and carrying an overnight load.

RIDING THE MONSOON

To recap: I ignored All-City's complete spec, got a mishmash of parts from various manufacturers, and put it together myself. So, how does it ride? Pretty darn well, thank you very much!

All in, the Gorilla Monsoon Project Bike weighs a few pounds less than All-City's complete model (not counting the rack and bag), with most of the savings in the wheels and tires, where it counts most. It's made for an entertaining rig that's at once a porky road bike and a speedy mountain bike. The frame is more overbuilt than svelte, so any suppleness in the ride comes from the

high-volume tires. But that overbuilt quality meant that I didn't hesitate to load the bike down.

Turn-in is a little slow, and the Gorilla's character is more steady and stable than quick and nimble. And anyone coming off a road bike will note the Q-Factor: to make room for 2.4in. tires, All-City went with a 73mm bottom bracket, the standard mountain bike width. I didn't mind the wider Q-Factor, but then again I still ride my fat bike in the summer, so what do I know?

Adding to the bike's stability is its low bottom bracket, which my tire choice made even lower. Loaded up for an overnight — lightweight panniers and the Pizza Bag up front, Revelate Tangle in the frame, and a Cedaero Drummond Draw seatbag in the rear — the Gorilla performed admirably. Like a good touring bike, it took a little effort to get the All-City up to speed, but once there, it wanted to stay on its course. Moving from pavement to dirt to doubletrack couldn't faze the Gorilla Monsoon.

I mostly rode the Gorilla with a front-biased load, which made it feel planted in the corners and nimble enough to avoid rocks and stumps in the trail. I wouldn't hesitate to install a rear rack, but with shortish 430mm chainstays, I would stick to smaller panniers.

GORILLAS IN THE MISSED

The Gorilla Monsoon isn't without its faults. The most noticeable is the frameset's weight, which I've mostly ameliorated in this build with

the flyweight XT wheels. And the paint, as pretty as it is, isn't terribly durable. I managed a few chips in the frame while building the bike, and I'm not *that* hamfisted. Finally, I take issue with All-City's routing of the front brake housing — it's been slowly rubbing the paint off the head tube and fork crown since Day 1. If you buy a Gorilla Monsoon, I would recommend applying protective tape to those areas.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This Project Bike began with my vision of the All-City Gorilla Monsoon as a modern all-road touring bike, and I think it's been a successful experiment. Compared to a traditional touring bike, the Gorilla has smaller wheels, fewer gears, and different geometry, but it would be just as capable on a fully loaded, racks-and-sacks road tour. And with a quick tire swap and a change to soft bags, it would be a fantastic rig for the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route. With fenders, it's a snappy-looking commuter. Stripped of gear, it's a spicy singletrack rig. Short of racing in *le Tour*, I'm confident that, with the right parts, the Gorilla Monsoon could serve the vast majority of your cycling needs. Just be sure to take care of that beautiful paint. **AC**

Dan Meyer is the Staff Writer for Adventure Cyclist.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 05 READER LETTERS

Regarding the review of the Da Vinci Designs Joint Venture in the June issue: I'm 65, and avoiding hills is not option. I have the E8000 on my bike. I can now enjoy longer rides regardless of what climbs lie ahead. And how is it cheating if I'm not trying to win anything? I just want to ride.

Mark Rackow | Newbury Park, California

CARMA (SIC)

Adventure Cycling/Bikecentennial life member 161 here writing in response

to your most recent letter from the editor about 50 issues of *Adventure Cyclist*. I read your letter and then turned the page and read "Riding across China with a companion she just just met" in the table of contents. I realize she had just met him paragraphs before, but nonetheless, is that a lot of enthusiasm for a brand new friend or is that a typo?!

Yafa Napadensky | Grand Marais, Minnesota

Editor's note: That's a karma typo, and it sure happened quick!