



ALCHEMY RONIN CARBON

Price: \$8,999 (as built)

Sizes available: 52cm, 54cm, 56cm, 58cm, 61cm (custom sizing also available)

Size tested: 56cm

Weight: 17.3 lbs. (without pedals)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

- **Stack:** 574mm
- **Reach:** 393mm
- **Head tube length:** 150mm
- **Head tube angle:** 72°
- **Seat tube length:** 545mm
- **Seat tube angle:** 73.5°
- **Top tube:** 563mm (effective)
- **Chainstays:** 425mm
- **Bottom bracket drop:** 70mm
- **Trail:** 65mm
- **Wheelbase:** 1030mm
- **Standover height:** 800mm

SPECIFICATIONS

- **Frame:** Alchemy Ronin Carbon, three bottle mounts, top tube mount, fender mounts
- **Fork:** Alchemy full carbon, fender mounts
- **Handlebar:** Enve carbon, 440mm
- **Stem:** Enve carbon, 100mm, +/-6 degree
- **Rear derailleur:** SRAM X01 Eagle AXS, 12spd
- **Shifter:** Shimano Ultegra Di2 ST-R8050
- **Derailleur:** Shimano GRX Di2 RD-RX817, clutch
- **Brakes:** Shimano Ultegra BR-R8070 hydraulic disc
- **Rotors:** Shimano SM-RT81, 160mm, Center Lock

ALCHEMY RONIN

BY JOSH TACK

→ Since the 1980s, Colorado has played host to a number of framebuilders. Names such as Merlin, Dean, Eriksen, Moots, Zinn, and Yamaguchi still demand a great deal of respect today. More recently, a new crop of builders has been busy making a name for themselves. Among these is Alchemy Bikes, a small framebuilding outfit with expertise in carbon and titanium. Their frames are handmade in Colorado, and in addition to making a range of stock sizes for each model, they also offer custom geometry and paint options with many of their bikes. They are currently based out of Denver with plans to relocate to a new facility in Golden, Colorado, this spring.

Alchemy's Ronin Carbon features a handmade carbon frame and fork with some nice features that include eyelets for fenders, three bottle cages, and top tube mounts for a bento box. As somewhat of a traditionalist, I appreciate the clean lines on this bike. Stepping back and taking it all in, the overall appearance is subdued with just a slight slope in the top tube and straight lines on the rear stays. Upon closer inspection, however, you can't help but notice the subtle tapered shapes of the tubes that create a unique overall ride quality. Also worth noting, Alchemy clearcoats their frames so you can see all the carbon detail that has gone into the creation of your bike.



- **Bottom bracket:** Praxis M30, press fit
- **Crankset:** Praxis Zayante M30 Carbon, 42T
- **Cassette:** Shimano XT M8000 11spd, 11-42T
- **Headset:** Cane Creek 40, integrated
- **Seatpost:** Enve carbon, 27.2mm, 25mm setback
- **Saddle:** Fizik Antares
- **Hubs:** DT Swiss 350 Straight Pull, 100 x 12mm front, 142 x 12mm rear, thru-axles
- **Rims:** Alchemy Carbon All-Road, tubeless compatible, 24h
- **Spokes:** Sapim CX Ray with alloy nipples
- **Tires:** Teravail Cannonball 700c x 35mm, tubeless ready
- **Chain:** Shimano CN-HG701

GEARING RANGE

	42
11	103.2
13	87.2
15	75.6
17	66.7
19	59.7
21	54.0
24	47.3
28	40.5
32	35.4
37	30.8
42	27.0

Contact: Alchemy Bikes, 7700 Cherry Creek South Dr., Unit 101, Denver, CO, 80231, 720.792.3729, alchemybikes.com



There are a couple build options available for the Ronin, all of which incorporate either Shimano Di2 or SRAM eTap electronic shifting, and range from \$8,999 to \$10,499. There is also a frameset-only option available for \$4,499 as well as custom geometry and/or paint options.

If you're experiencing a little bit of sticker shock, don't worry, you're not alone. Fifteen years in the nonprofit industry means this is firmly out of my reach, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate it. There's also a little perspective to take into account. Looking around at some other mass-produced and handmade bike companies alike, it's not rare to see bikes with similar component groups hit prices in the vicinity of \$10k. While spendy, I have no problem conceding that it's a good value for the build.

The bike I tested didn't feature a stock build and instead came equipped with a Shimano Ultegra Di2 1x11 drivetrain, Enve components, and Alchemy carbon tubeless wheels. There were some things I loved about this setup and some things that I didn't. I'm 100 percent sold on electronic shifting for gravel bikes, and even more so with Shimano Di2. I wouldn't go so far to say that I'd swap a perfectly fine mechanical drivetrain for an electronic one, but when it's time to replace parts, the goal will be to do away with cables and housing. This is a style of bike I would reach for when dusty and muddy roads are on tap, and for a bike that's going to get dirty a lot, it's nice not

worrying about mud and grit messing with shift cables. I also appreciate being able to easily shift gears when my hands are frozen in the winter and early spring months.

Unfortunately, all my love for electronic shifting can't be passed down to the 1x11 drivetrain. I'm a firm believer that a single chainring has its place in mountain biking and cyclocross, but I can't seem to enjoy it on gravel rides. Since gravel roads are still roads, I do like to have something that resembles road gearing. This isn't meant to be a hot take; I actually don't mind it at all for long, drawn-out climbs where I'm picking a gear and grinding it out. Where it can get a little bothersome is flat or rolling roads where shifts can be more frequent, and I find myself searching for gears that don't exist because the jumps from one gear to the next on an 11-42T cassette can be rather large. I'd much prefer a double crankset with a more compact cassette.

I very much enjoyed the Alchemy All-Road carbon tubeless wheelset.

These are designed with gravel riding in mind, yet weigh just a scant 1310g for the set. Thanks to their minimal weight, they accelerate incredibly quickly, which I appreciated on short, punchy climbs or taking off from a stop. As much fun as they were, they're absolutely a race-oriented wheelset — perfect for tackling a gravel or Roubaix-style event — but maybe less so for everyday rides or weekend adventures. This would be an ideal place to save some money on a complete build price and opt for a more budget-friendly set of wheels.

Where the ride quality is concerned, the Ronin Carbon has a stiff and responsive feel to it. As someone who spent a lot of time road racing in a former life, I get a lot of the same sensations out of this bike that I did from the various bikes I've used in competition. The Ronin reacts quickly to changes in pace; however, it isn't squirrely when faced with loose gravel or sandy roads.

I'd have no problem taking this out on a spirited group road ride, but

despite its quick and lively feel in a straight line, its cornering abilities match what you would expect from a gravel bike. I sometimes got so carried away thinking I was on a road bike that when a hairpin turn came up, I forgot I couldn't corner on a razor's edge and had to grab a handful of brakes to avoid drifting too far out.

The "gravel roads" we have in Montana aren't so much gravel as they are packed dirt, with plenty of potholes and/or washboard depending on the time of year, sprinkled with chunks of quartz sandstone. I had no complaints spending a few hours cruising the local fire roads, but anything more than that and I would get fatigued, mainly in the arms and shoulders from absorbing road vibrations. Some of this is due to the 700c x 32mm tires, and it's worth pointing out that there's clearance for up to 700c x 45mm tires, which would aid in smoothing out the ride.

Regardless, the Ronin was a bit harsher than similar bikes I've ridden in the past. With this in mind, I wouldn't necessarily recommend this

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bike to someone heading out on a long-distance tour unless they were planning on spending a fair bit of time on either paved roads or smoother gravel similar to the crushed limestone farm roads found in the Midwest (shout out to my hometown roads of Iowa City!).

Based on my few months with the Ronin Carbon, I believe the ideal candidate for this bike would be someone who has a bit of a competitive streak and likes to challenge themselves in events, but also has the desire to slap on framebags and lose themselves in a short bikepacking adventure. It's perhaps the closest thing I've experienced to a quiver killer and would tempt me into trading out my road, cyclocross, and gravel touring bike for one Ronin Carbon. It wouldn't replace a fully loaded touring bike, and while it is pretty fun on buffed-out singletrack, it bounces around too much on anything rooted or rocky.

With supply chain issues being a big problem for many bike manufacturers over the last year and a half, I was impressed to learn that a typical turnaround time for a frameset is just seven weeks. Since Alchemy makes their bikes in-house, in many ways they are their own supply chain. Like everyone else, there has been some difficulty sourcing components at times, but they've been able to churn out bikes throughout the pandemic without laying off a single employee. That's pretty cool.

If the Ronin has you intrigued, but you're not sold on the carbon platform, there is a Ronin Titanium available with similar build options and at a similar price point. **AC**

Josh Tack joined Adventure Cycling in 2007 as a database assistant, left the organization to bike tour for five months, came back as the membership manager, left again to do more adventuring, and is now here writing this article. He. Just. Won't. Go. Away.

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