



ROAD TEST

Diamondback Haanjo 5

words by DAN MEYER



RIMS

HED Tomcat Disc,
28h, tubeless ready

FRONT DERAILER

Shimano GRX810

CRANKSET

Shimano GRX600, 46/30T

BRAKES

Shimano GRX400,
hydraulic disc

REAR DERAILER

Shimano GRX810, clutch, 11spd

DIAMONDBACK HAANJO 5

• **BEST USES:** Road, gravel, light touring

• **PRICE:** \$2,050

• **FRAME:** 6061 aluminum, three bottle mounts, rack and fender mounts

• **WEIGHT:** 22.2 lbs.

• **AVAILABLE SIZES:** XS, S, M, L, XL

• **SIZE TESTED:** L

► As the latest niche in the cycling world — gravel — continues to evolve, it's refreshing to throw a leg over a bike that isn't trying to invent its own category. The Diamondback Haanjo 5 you see here is, in many ways, just a gravel bike. To me, that means it's what used to be called an endurance road bike with room for bigger tires. That's not to say that the Haanjo is out of date or out of touch. Indeed, it's a fully modern bike with an alloy frame, carbon fork, thru-axles, flat-mount hydraulic disc brakes, and an 11-speed drivetrain geared for mortal legs.

Diamondback is known as a value brand, a label that rings true when comparing the Haanjo 5's price and spec to its competitors. But in this case, the term "value" doesn't carry any negative connotations. The alloy frame features clean welds, fetching purple paint, and plenty of useful braze-ons. Where a lot of brands save money by gluing an alloy steerer to carbon lowers and calling it a carbon fork, the Haanjo's is a full carbon affair. The drivetrain is Shimano GRX, the wheels are tubeless-compatible HED rims laced to workhorse Novatec hubs, and even the stem, seatpost, and handlebar are from HED, components that are usually relegated to house brands. You even get a WTB Silverado saddle. That's a lot of bike for two grand. The one concession to cost-cutting is the tire choice — WTB Riddlers are fine tires, but these aren't tubeless compatible.

Interestingly, the drivetrain is Shimano GRX, but it's not all the same level of GRX. Diamondback's product manager smartly picked the higher-level bits where it made sense and saved money elsewhere. For example, the front and rear derailleurs are GRX810,

the top-level mechanical units, and they provide smooth, precise shifting. The crankset, however, is GRX600. Going with a mid-level crank is a smart way to keep the cost down, and anyway you can't get the 46/30T chainring combo in the top level. The brake/shift levers too are GRX600; they're comfortable and operate smoothly. The brake calipers are lower-level GRX400, and they're so incredibly powerful and noise-free that I struggle to see the need for more expensive stoppers.

That 46/30T crank, paired with an 11–34T cassette, is a sound gearing choice that I would like to see on more non-racing bikes. It won't get you the low granny gear of a classic triple, but it's a usable range with a low enough ratio that you could carry a moderate camping load up a moderately steep hill without exploding your kneecaps. You will run out of gears on the top end while descending something steep, but I don't see that as a big deal. Let gravity do its work! And between those two extremes, you'll have all the gears you need and good, fast shifting.

You might expect a bike with an alloy frame and a carbon fork — especially one that's a value proposition — to be stiff and unforgiving, but I'm here to tell you that isn't the case with the Haanjo. The Diamondback surprised me with a relatively compliant ride, and that's with tubed tires aired up to about 45 psi. Replacing the stock tires with tubeless models would only improve the ride quality. Confoundingly, the Haanjo felt snappy on acceleration, which would seem to belie its smooth ride quality. I can only chalk this up to its low weight of 22 pounds.

To emphasize its versatility, I rode the Haanjo on as much pavement as I did dirt, and I very much appreciated its on-road manners. So many modern gravel bikes come with extra-long wheelbases and super-slack head angles to the point where they feel unnatural and sluggish on the road, but the Haanjo felt right at home carving the canyon roads in my backyard. The tall stack height put me in a comfortable, heads-up position, which I especially appreciated on descents, and the steering felt quick and precise, more akin to my road bike than my personal gravel bike.

The tradeoff for the Haanjo's road manners is that it's not the bike you'll want for shredding singletrack. Unlike so many gravel bikes that share DNA with the MTB world, the Haanjo is truly a bike for gravel roads. As long as I kept it in its wheelhouse, the Haanjo felt stable and secure on dirt. When I ventured onto twisty singletrack or a rocky pitch, it felt nervous and out of sorts. Granted, the stock 37mm tires probably didn't help much in this regard. The Haanjo has room for bigger rubber — maybe 45mm — but the skinnier, faster-rolling treads suit its nature better.

If you're reading this and you like the idea of the Haanjo but can't shell out two grand, or you're willing to spend more for a full carbon build, then you're in luck. The Diamondback Haanjo is available in eight different iterations, from the \$785 Haanjo 1 with an alloy frame and fork and 9-speed Shimano Acera drivetrain to the \$4,650 Haanjo 8C Carbon with a top-level GRX drivetrain and carbon wheels. 🚲

Dan Meyer is the Managing Editor of Adventure Cyclist.

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