

**First look**

A gravel bike with obvious mountain bike influences, such as a dropper post and a wide bar



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The Friston aims for improved off-road stability with a shorter-offset fork (more trail), a longer-reach frame and a shorter stem  
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## Tech Spec

### WHYTE FRISTON

**Price:** £2,299.

**Sizes:** 50 (tested), 52, 54, 56, 58cm.

**Weight:** 10.7kg (23.6lb).

**Frame and fork:**

Whyte 6061 T6 hydroformed alloy 1x-specific frame, threaded BB, internal routing, thru-axle, flat-mount disc, and fittings for rear rack, rear mudguard, three bottles, top tube box/bag and down tube mudguard. Carbon fork with fittings for mudguard and two cargo/bottle cages.

**Wheels:** 45-622 Maxxis Rambler tyres, WTB ST i25 TCS 2.0 rims, 32 DT Swiss New Champion spokes, Whyte alloy centrelock hubs.

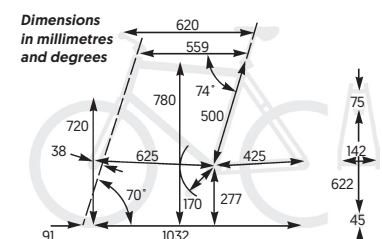
**Transmission:** Whyte alloy chainset with 38t chainring, BSA

68mm bottom bracket, SRAM 11-speed chain, Sunrace 10-42t cassette. SRAM Apex hydraulic shifters and long-cage rear derailleur. 11 ratios, 25-107in.

**Braking:** SRAM Apex hydraulic levers, 180/160mm SRAM CenterLine rotors.

**Steering & seating:** Whyte anti-slip cross tape, Whyte 500 by Controltech alloy handlebar, FSA No. 42 Integrated Road headset. Whyte Custom saddle, 70mm travel Trans-X YSP38 Dropper Post with rocker remote, Whyte seat clamp.

**Equipment:** Concealed hex key in front axle, rubberised chainstay protector [whytebikes.com](http://whytebikes.com)



of the Friston are both tubeless compatible, so you could choose to set them up tubeless yourself at home. If you wanted to do that on the Diverge, you'd first have to upgrade both the rims (or, more likely, wheelset) and the tyres, which would be a significant cost.

The Specialized Pathfinder Sport and the Maxxis Rambler TR are both gravel tyres, though the former is a 38mm, semi-slick option, while the Rambler is a chunkier 45mm width with a much more aggressive tread.

## Ride

The Diverge looks to be nearer the road end of the gravel spectrum, with the Friston closer to the mountain bike end. But do they ride as such? Testing on flowing gravel roads, some rocky singletrack, muddy trails and linking lanes at home in Devon, I put both through their paces.

First up, the Specialized Diverge behaved largely as expected. The low-profile tyres offered little rolling resistance, giving a sprightly ride on the road without the drag of more heavily treaded gravel tyres. It also felt quite light, which made road miles a joy, and it climbed and cornered responsively



**Top:** The rims and 45mm tyres are tubeless ready. You could even upsize to 50mm



**Bottom:** A 70mm dropper post makes technical terrain easier

on tarmac. The Future Shock spring did creak a little when climbing out of the saddle.

When it came to riding off road, the downsides of the narrower, semi-slick tyres started to show. Set to a fairly high pressure to prevent pinching the innertubes, they often bounced off rocks or skidded sideways on gravel tracks, giving a skittery, disconcerting ride, especially when cornering on loose surfaces. Over bumpy hardpack and rockier terrain, I was really bounced about, the narrow tyres offering little suspension over the rough surface. Forest fire roads were better, with the Future Shock 1.5 coming into play to smooth out the smaller bumps.

The good news is that there's clearance for tyres up to 42mm wide front and rear, which would allow you to run lower pressures for more off-road shock absorption. You can't go too low without switching to a tubeless setup, however, which, as noted, would be expensive due to the need for new wheels.

The SRAM Apex drivetrain shifted reliably, if a little clunkily. The gearing is fairly wide ranging but I would have benefitted from a lower bottom gear for