

JUNE / JULY 23

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Yes! It is time for issue 76. In this issue we sit down with Olly Wilkins to talk about Surrey Hills, all different ways of riding and life. We went to visit Haibike HQ in Germany to ride their latest lightweight E-MTB and Tim went to Arizona to dodge cacti and

rattlesnakes while riding epic trails. We spoke to Mischa about a new route grading system called ITRS. This issue's Trail Guide is all about Nelson New Zealand and of course there are the regulars like Technique, Tried and Tested, Movienight and Lightbox. Enjoy!

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TACOS & TUMBLES IN TUCSON / TRAIL GUIDE - NELSON, NZ
ITRS - ROUTE GRADING SYSTEM / BEHIND THE BRAND / TESTS & MORE!

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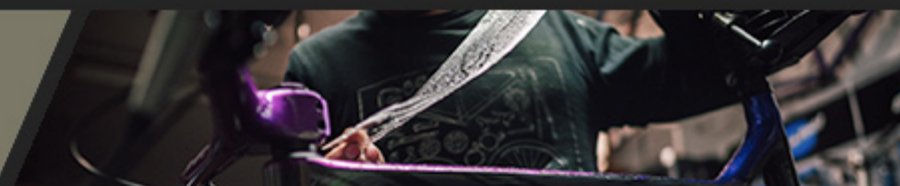
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COMPETITION



BEHIND THE BRAND -
INVISIFRAME



EDITORIAL



VISITING HAIBIKE HQ



OLLY WILKINS
INTERVIEW



TECHNIQUE



TACOS AND TUMBLES
IN TUCSON



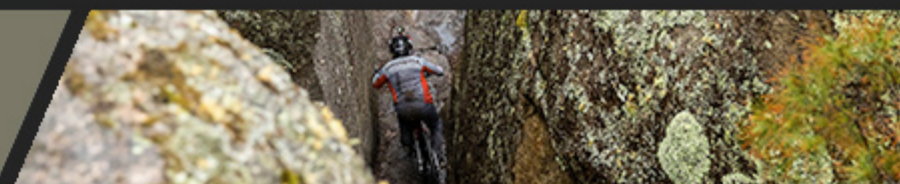
TRIED AND TESTED



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TRAIL GUIDE -
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RIDER ALEXPROD
PHOTO JARNO HOOGLAND

WIN

...A SET OF SCHWALBE'S
NEW TACKY CHAN'S!

Schwalbe is the tire brand to turn to if you're looking for traction and impact protection. For years their Magic Mary's and Big Betty tires have been raking in the medals at World Cup DH races.

For those that had eagle eyes, you could have noticed something special about the Schwalbe tires the top pro's were using at the past few races. We had to be patient but now the cat is finally out of the bag. With the brand new Tacky Chan, Schwalbe finally released their brand new, top of the range DH tire and the best part is, you can win a pair!

The Tacky Chan is available in 6 different variations that are all made with Fairtrade rubber. Schwalbe pays a Fair Rubber premium for every kilogram of rubber. This premium is used exclusively to improve the living conditions of small farmers and their families.

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FEATURES


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PHOTO JULIA BIGIO
WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND
LOCATION BIKEPARK VERBIER

ISSUE 76

Ah summer! The season we've all been waiting for. Sunshine, bikeparks open and chairlifts buzzing. What's not to like about this time of year?

What's going on in the world as I write this? We have so far still avoided the imminent AI takeover in day to day life, Crypto currencies are in a deep battle with governments and regulators as the bikepark crews are working their behinds off to clean the trails from snow.

A cold stint of crappy weather in the last weeks of winter dumped a significant amount of the white stuff on the peaks above 2000m, leaving many bikeparks and high alpine routes closed for longer than usual.

As for this issue, we have a lot of cool articles once again. Tim went to Arizona and tried (and failed) not to hit a cactus. We have Nelson New Zealand in our Trail Guide section. If it wasn't on your bucket list already, it will be after reading this!

We also sat down with Micha who is part of the ITRS project, creating an international trail rating system that can be applied to any type of trail world wide. An absolute monster of a task that will create some really interesting results and job opportunities!

Of course we tracked down an interesting bike rider to pester him with some questions. For those who don't know Neko Mulally, grab a cup of coffee and have a read. Not only is he hella fast, he also loves a

challenge. We talk about racing, YouTube stardom and the process of designing and building your own World Cup race bike from scratch without an engineering degree or million dollar budgets.

As always I hope you enjoy the fruits of our labor. You can show your appreciation by sharing some of our articles online, send us a message directly or by supporting the magazine with a small donation. It will be much appreciated.

For now, it's time to scroll ahead and get stuck in issue 76 of IMB Magazine.

Enjoy!

Jarno Hoogland
Publishing Editor

WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND & OLLY WILKINS
THANKS TO JAMES HARDS
PHOTOS DAN MILNER, CA GREENWOOD & FOCUS BIKES

A full-page background photograph of a mountain biker, Olly Wilkins, standing on a grassy hillside. He is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt, black shorts, a helmet, and gloves. He is holding his blue mountain bike high above his head with both hands. The background is a vast landscape of rolling hills under a dramatic sunset sky with orange and yellow clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong silhouette effect on the rider and the hills.

— THE INTERVIEW — OLLY WILKINS

Not all heroes wear capes and not all pro riders are racers. One guy who has been entertaining the MTB crowd for years now is Surrey Hills based Olly Wilkins. He earned his ranks as a pro dirt jumper, but has always been seen on any iteration of bike out there.

" WHEN THE BUILD IS FINISHED WE COME AND DO THESE MASSIVE JUMPS AND TRICKS THAT THEY COULDN'T HAVE DREAMED WERE POSSIBLE "

Weather its razzin' on his E-MTB, travelling the globe for projects of throwing huge whips on the dirt jumps, Olly always seems to have a trademark grin and vibe to what he does. We managed to corner him and fire a few questions his way.

Hi Olly! How are things? What are you up to these days?

Hey Jarno, yeah I'm very well thanks. Thanks for doing the interview with me!

My pleasure. I saw you've been to Mexico recently, tell us a bit about that trip.

Yeah Mexico was amazing. It's actually one of the coolest things I have done, So that trip was not just a riding trip. We actually went there to help local communities and build an Urban DH track. That stuff is getting really popular these days, especially with Red Bull on board. The basic idea was to go there for 10 days, me and some of my best friends build a track and then we get to ride it.

It's a pretty cool experience, as when we show up most people have no clue on what a mountain bike is and they're a bit weary of you. Then during the week you're in their streets doing some hard work, shovelling dog poo, cleaning the area and building stuff with wood. So they come to like you and interact a bit more, and when the build is finished we come and do these massive jumps and tricks that they couldn't have dreamed were possible and you've become their friend. It's a really cool experience, the people are so nice there. I love Mexico!





" IT'S REALLY THE AMOUNT OF VARIATION YOU CAN FIND THERE WHICH MAKES IT SO UNIQUE. "

You've had the chance to visit a lot of places riding bikes. Which one stands out for you and why?

Well, from a people point of view, the Mexico trip was amazing. Most of the riding was more in an urban setting though. I mean we did ride some trails there, but the scene is not huge so the trails are a bit more limited.

But when it comes down to the best places to ride from a trails point of view, I feel like I am a bit of a broken record haha. I'd have to say Madeira stands out for me. It's really the amount of variation you can find there which makes it so unique. The builders there have done an outstanding job on creating these, so shout out to John Fernandez and his crew, they've done a killer job.

Yeah, Madeira does have some amazing riding indeed. Is there any place you haven't visited yet and that's high on your bucket list?

Japan! I went there on a hiking holiday and got blown away. When hiking in the high alpine mountains they were not just your classic copy paste Pine tree forests. I think you can actually find a lot of super loamy trails over there and I just love loam. So I really need to get myself back there again with a bike.

Does Japan have a big riding scene?

Good question, I don't know really. You'd expect so, they have a lot of National parks and stuff and there are loads of people living there. But that's a bit of the allure to me, the now knowing part. That's what brings the adventure you know.

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"BASICALLY I WAS INTO DANGER, SPEED, WOODS AND MECHANICAL STUFF... SO MOUNTAIN BIKING IS THE ULTIMATE FUSION OF ALL OF THAT."

Rumour is you used to live in Belgium. Is that true and are the Flemish Fries better than the French?

How the heck do you know that?! Haha, yeah I was born in England and lived in Belgium until I was three years old. As for the fries, I really don't know about that one. Need to do a comparative test next time I'm in the area.

Staying in the past a bit. How did you start off riding bikes in the first place?

Well I guess it started out with family bike rides. Actually, my mum told me there was always something wrong with me from the beginning. I always had to be moving, on a bike or a scooter or something. But it wasn't like a proper hobby until later in life when we started going on family bike rides. Basically I was into danger, speed, woods and mechanical stuff... so mountain biking is the ultimate fusion of all of that.

Were you ever a lycra clad XC racer?

Haha, no never. I've never really raced XC,

but I do think most of the riding I do I would call Cross Country to be honest. Even when I was competing in dirt jumping, there was a huge amount of time I was just out riding my bike. In the end I think there are a lot of labels, but it's all just riding bikes isn't it? I think we have made it sound a lot more complicated than it actually is with all these labels. It's just ups, downs, jumps and corners in the end.

If you weren't a bike rider, how would you spend your weekends?

I have absolutely no idea haha. I am way too deep in bikes these days that I have no clue what else I would do. Maybe I'd be into basketball? My family is quite into that, and I played a lot when I was younger,

" NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT THEM, THEY DO BRING MORE PEOPLE TO THE SPORT WHICH IS ALWAYS A GOOD THING. "

so I guess that would be my best answer. But I don't think I'd be very good at it, being only 6ft tall and barely able to walk or jump these days haha.

You were one of the first to embrace the E-bike hype. Do you ride them a lot?

True, when I started riding for Focus, they gave me one of their E-MTB's and at that time none of my friends had one yet. So that first year I didn't really get it because I was just miles ahead or riding on my own a lot and at that point I didn't see when and why I would choose it over a standard bike.

Then when some of my good friends got one too, and then in the depth of winter we really started to get it. We would just charge 'em up and go for high speed laps, charge them up and go again. And the amount of miles we were able to put in and the fact that you could still push yourself physically really jumped out for us and we figured it was actually good training for downhill racing.

Over time I really found a time and type of riding I enjoy doing on the electric bike and although it would never replace my regular riding, it is amazingly fun to do. And the good thing is, no matter what you say about them, they do bring more people to the sport which is always a good thing.

I don't want to sound like some cheesy salesman of some type of pyramid scheme, but I'd say just give them a go. Get out on one and make up your own mind if this is something you enjoy or not.





" REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING WHAT'S NEXT, WE'RE DEFINITELY ON THE STEEP PART OF THE PROGRESSION CURVE HERE. "

Recently the market has been moving more towards the lighter E-bikes. What's your thoughts on the new lightweight Emtb thing?

Yeah, Focus actually is one of the brands which have many different E-bikes in the range, with different motor and battery sizes. So I have already been able to try out the Bosch, Fazua and Shimano. There are great things about all of them and I don't think we can even begin to imagine where we will be in about 10 years from now.

When for example I take a ride on the Fazua system, if I compare it to the first ever E-bike I had, that's already such a drastic change. The weight, the power output and handling is just a world of difference, and that progress just happened in a really short period of time. Really looking forward to seeing what's next, we're definitely on the steep part of the progression curve here.

YouTube and social media has made quite an impact on the day to day of the MTB pro rider. Can you tell us a little about what YouTube does for you?

Ah good question. Well, I basically stopped competing when I was about 19, mainly because I just wasn't motivated enough anymore. And since then I had to find ways of bringing worth to my sponsors, because I still wanted to continue riding every day of course.

So YouTube is just another one of those things that is just required of you. Not that I don't enjoy it though, actually for me it is a really nice creative outlet.



"MY TAKE IS JUST TO MAKE INTERESTING CONTENT AND I DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT ALGORITHMS AND AD REVENUE."

And if you have a creative / ADHD mind it is easy to come up with ideas. As I am a mountain biker I know that anything I come up with is authentic and interesting for the people that view my content. I just build trails, ride loamers, I ride all kinds of different disciplines, basically just do what I enjoy and bring some value to my sponsors that way.

It is tricky sometimes because it is absolutely non stop content. Now I don't expect you to play any violin music or anything like that, haha. But it is something that takes up a lot of time. And I'm really lucky to kind of be able to spread this between YouTube, my podcast and social media and stuff. In the end I reach a much wider audience than I used to with just the printed magazines. It's a weird feeling though, because sometimes you're just out there on a trail all by yourself making a video and talking to yourself haha.

You must have a lot of content and footage,

do you have to be careful with what you bring out to play with the YouTube rules and please the algorithm?

Yeah I've spent ages of trying to figure that bit out, but in the end you realise you just can't predict what will happen. Sometimes a video gets flagged or de-monetised so you don't make any ad revenue from it, and you can't really figure out why. My take is just to make interesting content and I don't worry too much about algorithms and ad revenue. Otherwise in the end you will end up making new iterations of the same video again and again because it got a lot of views and likes. I prefer to make interesting videos, or at least try!

With the summer in full swing, what trips and events have you planned this year?

Yes. I have a series of street races in Mexico and South America, and that's with my team of friends that we do the track builds with. Then there is a chance I will be digging at Rampage again for the 8th time, so that's going to be really good. And of course there will be numerous smaller projects in between, but hopefully I get to be home sometime at home too.

On all those long trips, you must have a lot of time for music / podcasts. What's on your spotify these days?

One I am definitely excited about is called '13 minutes to the moon' by the BBC, it's about how we landed on the moon and the other Apollo missions. How crazy is that? I'm there, a 37 year old man digging a 12 foot high jump in the woods by himself, listening to stories about how we went to the moon.

If for some reason you had to flee the UK. Where would you move to and why? and what would you take with you?

I think I'd move to another island, Madeira. Besides the insane riding it has a really nice vibe to it as well. As for what I'd bring, obviously my bikes, my chickens and my cat. Oh and my girlfriend of course! I probably should have mentioned her first haha!

Lastly, who would you like to thank?

Well, you for getting me interviewed of course, but of course my sponsors: Focus bikes, Troy Lee Designs, Goodyear Bike, X Fusion Shocks, DMR, Stans NoTubes, Melon glasses, Motul and of course InvisiFrame. Oh and mum and dad of course!



TACOS AND TUMBLES IN TUCSON

Keep your pedals level

It's always the stupid ones that hurt. Seconds before, I'd been minding my own business, cruising along, gazing at the towering cacti and yellow poppies without a care in the world. Then a tiny "crack" and I'm instantly pancaked into the dusty ground, palms out, gloves sitting forgotten in my backpack. I was lucky - I only lost some skin off my palm and a small measure of dignity. Two feet shorter and I'd have landed full-body on a large prickly pear, and that would have been much worse, likely involving my tender parts exposed to every passing hiker, while a relative stranger slowly extracted cactus spines with tweezers. This landscape might be beautiful, but it isn't very forgiving. Welcome to Tucson, Arizona.

" I LOVE THE WILDERNESS AND THE OUTDOORS WITH ALL MY HEART, AND RIDING IN IT IS THE MOST RELIABLE FORM OF HAPPINESS I KNOW. "

JOJO LEFT HIS HOME...

Maybe you remember it from the lyrics of 'Get Back'. Or you've seen it in those pictures of those giant aircraft graveyards. A ZZ Top video perhaps...

Even if you haven't been here, you'll recognise it. From a thousand movie scenes, or Wile E Coyote and Roadrunner, or whatever you see in your head when you picture the American West.

The cacti are as tall as houses, the desert scrubland spreads in all directions, and the rocks change colour from yellow to orange to purple with the setting of the sun. I'm here to ride as much as I can in three days, which turns out to be just a fraction of the trails, and best of all, Tucson is a city. A real one. That means decent wine. Painfully specialist coffee. A chance of getting some dinner after 8pm.

I love the wilderness and the outdoors with all my heart, and riding in it is the most reliable form of happiness I know. But when it's over, you can take your tents and your head-torches and your hand-operated coffee grinders and carry on over the next hill. I want a hot shower, a cold beer and a menu. Seems Tucson has all three, in excellent shape.

SINGLETRACK SATISFACTION AT SWEETWATER

After a heartily delicious breakfast of Huevos Rancheros in the 5 Points Market a few minutes from our hotel (we're just an hour or so from the border with Mexico, and there's great Mexican food everywhere), our Tucson initiation begins at Sweetwater Preserve in Saguaro National Park.





"THE TRAILS ARE MOSTLY SMOOTH, ROLLING AND GENTLE - NO ABRUPT PUNCHES UP ROCKY INCLINES, NO BIG JUMPS OR DROPS"

We (guide Matt, snappers Casey and Tyson and myself) are starting here at Sweetwater Preserve trails for a reason. Just because I'm a journalist, and my companions are pro photographers, doesn't mean we necessarily know how to ride. So day one is a taster day, just so Matt can make sure we're not going to ruin his week by requiring a tourniquet, an airlift and a ton of insurance paperwork.

These trails, nestling in the foothills of the Tucson Mountain Park, aren't going to feature in any Enduro or DH races anytime soon, although there's plenty of those trails around. If you picked your route here carefully, you could cruise around with the kids, or a friend who was just getting started. The trails are mostly smooth, rolling and gentle - no abrupt punches up rocky inclines, no big jumps or drops - but if you came to Tucson and didn't ride here, you'd be missing out, because it's absolutely spectacular.

Huge, aged Saguaro cacti tower over the trail, throwing impossible shadows. There are Teddy Bear Cholla cacti too (so called because of their deceptively fluffy exterior, which is actually thousands of sharp spines), and bright red Ocotillo plants and chubby barrel cacti, strewn among a carpet of yellow desert poppies. The hard packed, narrow singletrack weaves in and out of the cartoon cacti, and it's fast - our guide Matt sets a pace that pushes us up and down the undulating landscape, over rock gardens and through dry riverbeds until we're breathless. An excellent start as far as I'm concerned, even with a bandage on my scuffed palm. If this is a gentle introduction, I can't wait for the rest.

" WE SET OFF FOR THE 50 YEAR TRAILS, A COLLECTION OF XC AND TECHNICAL TRAILS AT THE BASE OF THE NORTH-EASTERN EDGE OF THE CATALINA STATE PARK "

Matt - funny, considerate and an excellent rider - also knows how to take care of a gang of hot, thirsty people. A cooler full of sodas and beers, snacks and some camping chairs appear from the van, we toast the day's success, and head back to clean up before supper.

HEARTY STARTY

I am a sucker for a proper American breakfast. I hate starting the day with a snatched McDonald's in the van, or with campfire porridge. I like a couple of coffees, a chance to plan, maybe let last night's wine recede slightly from my frontal lobes.

We've been urged to try Seis Kitchen, an authentic Mexican breakfast spot, and from the line at the window and constant procession of high-end roadies piling in for coffee, it's clearly a local favourite. This is supposed to be a feature about riding, not food, but just consider this for a minute. Three scrambled eggs, mixed with a handful of fresh tortilla chips that have wilted in the heat, along with refried beans topped with cheese, a mountain of roasted potatoes and a choice of salsas? Tell me you don't want that before a day on the bike, and I'll tell you you're a liar.

Four coffees later, groaning with pleasure and waddling slightly, we set off for the 50 Year Trails, a collection of XC and technical trails at the base of the north-eastern edge of the Catalina State Park, about 50 mins drive from Tucson. Everyone I met who knew anything about riding here told me we had to come here. So we did.



SLAB HAPPY

I have my doubts about doing anything strenuous after our breakfast. I consider just curling up in the van and leaving them to it. But the lure of the mountains is a strong one, and soon we're speeding across the desert floor from the trailhead, heading for 'The Chutes'. How's this for smart, considerate trail building? The main '50 Year' trail is, we're told, pretty technical, with a lot of technical features, super-steep climbs, rock slabs and more. So before you get there, you can ride 'The Chutes'.

"WE'RE SPEEDING
ACROSS THE
DESERT FLOOR
FROM THE
TRAILHEAD"

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MAGURA

" IT'S THE KIND OF TRAIL THAT MAKES YOU ODDLY DISAPPOINTED YOU DON'T HAVE ALL DAY TO DO IT OVER AND OVER, JUST TO SEE HOW FAST YOU CAN GET. "

This is a small but perfectly formed trail on shallower ground, closer to the trailhead, which can either be a great warm-up before the main event, or a place to just session and improve your skills. It reminds me of a water slide at a swimming pool - deeply dug into the ground, with a bunch of options from the top, and the chance to ride high up the sides if you're fast or good enough. Ten minutes of reasonable pedalling and you're back up top, ready to do it all again. It's the kind of trail that makes you oddly disappointed you don't have all day to do it over and over, just to see how fast you can get.

But we have bigger fish to fry. Or whatever the desert version is. Cacti to avoid, maybe.

'50 Year' is a proper hearty serving of a trail, and not for the faint-hearted. It's a 1.6 km Black Diamond section of a much larger trail that runs in a 31 km loop from Catalina State Park, but today we're doing the upper section, where the fun stuff is most concentrated.

If you've never ridden on this desert granite, it's something you should try. The levels of grip are unbelievable. We climb up impossibly steep rock faces, at a pace barely above a trackstand, without a single slip of the tyre. And descents that, on dustier or more slippery rocks, would have most of us calling mountain rescue, can be tackled at whatever pace you like, hand heavy on the front brake, with enough traction to stop and have a look around before you get to the bottom.





" I FOOLISHLY USE MY BACK BRAKE INSTEAD OF MY FRONT AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT. I JUST MANAGE TO CATCH THE BIKE BEFORE I SLIDE INTO A 20FT GULLY. "

There are ride-arounds and alternate lines everywhere, and Matt finds an optional line about 30 mins into the ride that tests me to the limit. It's a rock spine with a hefty hop-up to begin, followed by 15ft of balancing on the slim apex, before a near-vertical roll to the trail, with a hefty rock lump at the bottom right where you don't want it. Matt, predictably, makes it

look easy, but I foolishly use my back brake instead of my front at a crucial moment. I just manage to catch the bike before I slide into a 20ft gully. I give it another go, but have to dab my foot down halfway, failure again. Well maybe next time.

After a couple more hours of plunging, hopping onto ledges, and generally having my novice ass handed to me, we end with a swift, twisty singletrack sprint along Middle Gate trail. There's a ton of pedalling, ruts and rock hops that help to end the ride on a high.

'50 Year' might not be there for that long - the land is on a lease that's due to end - so I'm glad to get the chance to ride it. You should too. It's amazing.

LEMMON DROPS

We've all felt the distinct tourist's disappointment. You get somewhere new, you go and do the thing that all the guidebooks and reviews and whatever tell you is the best - a restaurant, a day out, a view - and it's not great. When you mention it to locals, they give you a pitying smile, and tell you where you should have gone instead.



" BY THE TIME WE STOP TO ADMIRE THE VIEW FROM THE TOWERING HOODOOS, WE'RE ALL IN FULL-ON BABBLING ADRENALINE MODE. "

I had that fear about 'Bug Springs'. It's the one Tucson trail I've heard of, and the one that everyone mentioned when I told them I was coming here, so I'm half-expecting the reality to fall short of the hype.

After yet another breakfast big enough to fell a woodchipper, we join Matt and shuttle driver Eric at the van. You can ride 'Bug Springs' by climbing the road, or via a gravel/xc route from the other side of Mt. Lemmon, but who says no to an uplift?

This hill feels like the cycling capital of Arizona. There are road cyclists, mountain bikers and bike-laden vehicles on every inch of the steep mountain road that takes us 5000ft up, and any thoughts that this ride might be over-hyped ebb away with every sharp hairpin. It's a different landscape too - more wooded, with denser greenery than the desert vistas of the previous two days, small streams of snowmelt trickling down the rocks and a great view over the city. By the time we reach the top we're all raring to go.

Except the top isn't, you know, the real top. The real top is a solid, deep breath, you-can-do-it, push up a series of steep wooded steps cut into the peak to help hikers out.

It's totally worth it. 'Bug Springs' throws us right in at the deep end, with steep, chunky technical turns, stretches of lingering snow crust and deep fast chutes. There are tight switchbacks, sudden bursts of intense climbing, and by the time we stop to admire the view from the towering hoodoos, we're all in full-on babbling adrenaline mode. It just keeps changing.



" I'VE NEVER BEEN WELCOMED WITH ANYTHING OTHER THAN GENUINE WARMTH BY THE MTB COMMUNITY HERE, AND TUCSON IS NO EXCEPTION. "

One minute we're skittering across off-camber kitty litter with deadly plunges to one side, the next we're rolling up and over huge boulders in the forest, with countless line choices, boosting bumps and narrow navigation spots along the way.

We descend 500m over nearly 8km, and every second of it is a pure adrenaline bath. I'd fly out here just to ride this trail and go straight back home, just for the grin it puts on everyone's faces.

After a quick stop to wolf snacks and gird loins, we cross the road and head down 'Prison Camp', a faster, less technical trail that descends over 200m in a couple of miles, and feels like a playground after 'Bug Springs' - we all hit it as fast as we can, popping off rocks and yelling our lungs out. Eric is waiting at the bottom with the van, a pillow-sized bag of tortilla chips, spicy salsa and a cooler full of beers and sodas. A truly epic and unforgettable day's riding.

SAY IT AIN'T OVER

I really love America - not just for the riding, and the beauty of the landscape,

but because I've never been welcomed with anything other than genuine warmth by the MTB community here, and Tucson is no exception. Local bike shop owner and Tucson MTB veteran Dale invites me over to his Guru Bikes store that same night, so we can talk MTB, and join him and his buddies on a night ride of the same Sweetwater trails I rode earlier in the week. They come alive in a whole new way at night. The giant saguaro cacti take on mysterious forms against the sunset, and the night sky is filled with clouds of stars, a low full moon and the soft flit of bats against the torch beams. Plus we get to go for \$3 beef head tacos afterwards. Instant joy, instant friends, instant welcome. Love this place.



As I take advantage of Dane's extensive workshop (and expertise) to pack my loaner Revel Rail 29 back into its bag the next day, praying to god it doesn't get thrown down the stairs by customs officials (or labelled as a trade sample, and obliging me to spend many hours explaining how it's not mine, but I'm allowed to have it, and I'm not going to sell it, etc), I get a couple of hours to quiz Dane and his friendly crew about Tucson, and riding, and life in general. They're devotees, to a man - Dane's just opened the shop, after being here for over 20 years, because he thinks the scene is so healthy. And it really feels that way. Three days riding here, and I know I've only scratched the surface of the mountains that surround this city, the dozens of trails they hide, and the dozens more yet to be built.

It's cheaper and quicker to go to the French Alps, or Final Ligure, or Bikepark Wales, or your local pump track for that matter. But the riding, the landscape, the atmosphere and the people here guarantees you a mountain bike adventure that you'll remember for the rest of your life. I'd say it's worth the extra.

Thanks to Visit Tucson <https://www.visittucson.org/>
Homegrown MTB <https://homegrownmtb.com/>
and Revel Bikes <https://revelbikes.com/> for their help with this article.

What I rode: Revel Rail 29" in Large, with SRAM Eagle 1x1 <https://revelbikes.com/product/rail29/>

Where I rode: Sweetwater Preserve trails
The Chutes, Upper 50 Year and Middle Gate trails
Bug Springs and Prison Camp trails

Where I stayed: Tucson Motel
<https://www.thetucsonhotel.com/>

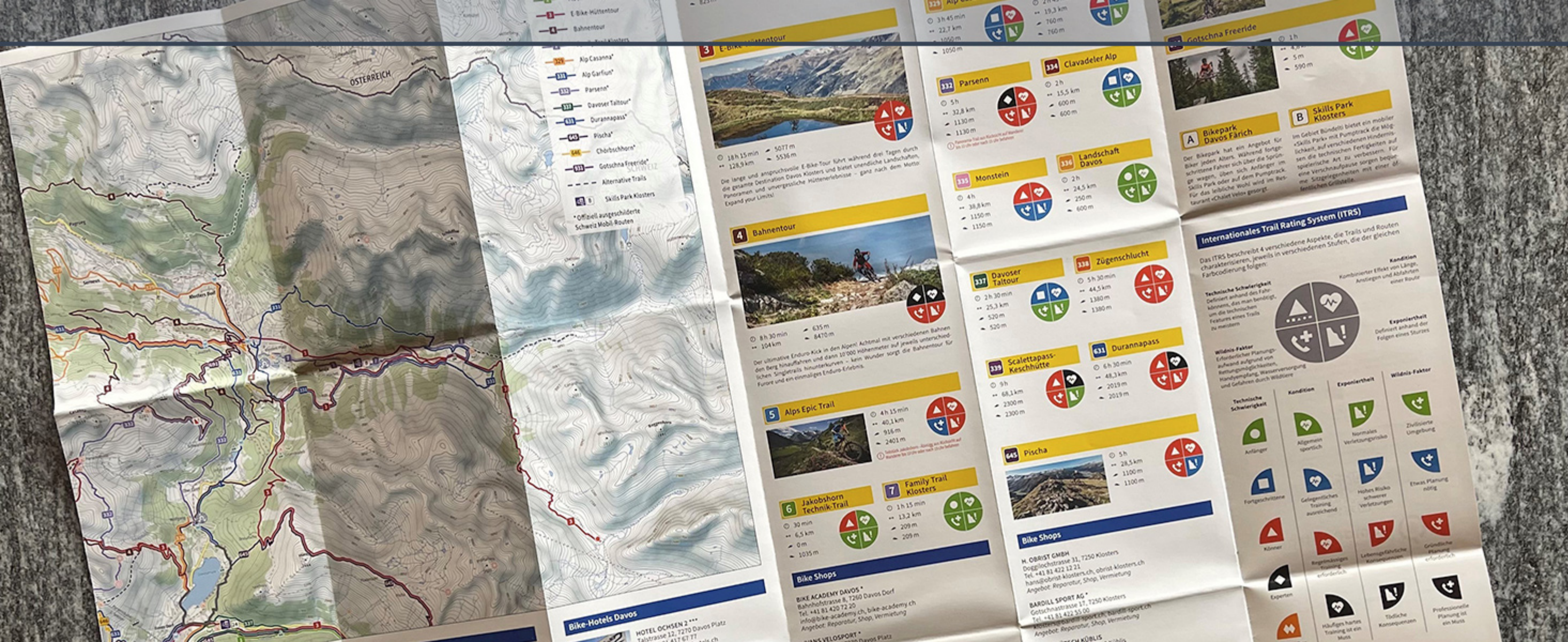
Who I rode with: <https://homegrownmtb.com/>

ITRS

WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND & MISCHA CRUMBACH PHOTOS ITRS & MISCHA CRUMBACH

SLAYING THE TRAIL RATING DRAGON

"How techy is it?" my friend asks me as I try to convince Bob to join the 'Big Epic Mission' that I have planned for tomorrow. And it's a great question indeed. I could tell him what he wants to hear and make sure he joins the adventure tomorrow, but I decided to give him an honest description instead.



" AIMED TO SLOWLY REPLACE THE EXISTING TRAIL RATING SYSTEMS IN THE WORLD FOR OFF-ROAD CYCLING. "

I take a long hard think and mention the big rock drop halfway, the short section of exposed trail at the top and the tree rooted steep turns at the bottom. In terms of riding time I have done it in about 4-5 hours moving time and I remember the climb was a slog but that's about as detailed as I could make it.

Now I am in the luxury position of riding bikes for 30+ years and capable of handling almost anything thrown in front of my wheels. He however only started riding 2 years ago, and just managed his first bunny hop. Oh and he has vertigo. So basically my description is pretty useless and he is left to the mercy of fate and my poor judgement to decide if he is going to have fun tomorrow.

This situation is actually a really common one, and although there are several trail

rating systems in place across the globe, there was none that gave all the information you needed. Until now.

THE SYSTEM

The International Trail Rating System or ITRS for short, is aimed to slowly replace the existing trail rating systems in the world for off-road cycling. By combining various existing systems and adding in any missing parameters, they aim to have a solid solution in place for grading bikeparks, purpose built features and obstacles, natural singletrack and anything in between.



RIDER PAUL BASAGOITIA
LOCATION SANTA CRUZ, USA
PHOTO HOSHI YOSHIDA
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29"

38
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SR SUNTOUR



" THE ITRS TAKES ALL THREE PARAMETERS INTO ACCOUNT WHEN ASSESSING A BIKE ROUTE "

By looking at the trail from a bikers perspective the rating system takes into account four main pillars that determine the difficulty of a ride.

1. Technical difficulty
2. Endurance
3. Exposure
4. Wilderness

The first parameter needs no real explanation, and is used on many different rating systems across the globe. By measuring the obstacles on a route, mandatory airtime, height of drops and difficulty level of trail features you can get a decent assessment of the technique needed to tackle a trail.

For the Endurance part of the rating, most systems only use the distance of a route and the amount of climbing involved to determine the difficulty level. But ask anyone that has ever spent time in a bikepark or has had more than 4000m of vertical drop to descend, they will clearly explain to you that riding a bike down a hill is extraordinarily tiring. The ITRS takes all three parameters into account when assessing a bike route, making sure you have more information at hand to decide if the route is for you.

Exposure is another factor that was currently not treated separately by the North American IMBA rating system. Mainly because in that part of the world, almost all of the trails are purpose built, and who would make a bike trail on the edge of a cliff?

"ARE YOU TRAVELLING THROUGH BEAR INFESTED FORESTS OR ARE THERE VENOMOUS SPIDERS OR SNAKES ALONG THE ROUTE? "

In Europe and other parts of the world however, many bike trails originate (and still serve as) hiking trails, often used for centuries by adventurers, hunters and farmers to commute. A trail can be without any technical features but if death is imminent when you leave the trail, this should be announced in the rating.

The same thing goes for the wilderness element.

Not only does this take the distance to civilization into account, but also if there are any water points along the trail, shops, cell phone reach or how easily a rescue operation can be executed if something goes wrong.

Also, wildlife can play an important role in your riding experience. Are you travelling through bear infested forests or are there venomous spiders or snakes along the route? Good to know!

As you can see this is quite an inclusive way to rate trails, and everything has been done to leave as little to chance and imagination as possible. Not only does this provide a good basis for riders to decide where to go, it also helps coaches develop skills courses, guides with communicating what level trails their customers can expect and bikeparks across the globe speak the same language to prevent accidents.

'THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT'

As we're well into 2023, there is an app for anything in life, and also the people behind the ITRS are working hard on a digital app to support the rating system. Although still under development, the main functionality for the initial version of the app is aimed at the people that rate the trails.

SWISS BIKE PARK OBERRIED

DROPS

SCHWIERIGKEITSGRAD

EXTREME	EXPERT	ADVANCED	INTERMEDIATE
Extrem-Biker:innen	Expert:innen	Könnern:innen	Fortgeschrittene
Drop 1 links	Drop 2 Mitte links	Drop 3 Mitte rechts	Drop 4 rechts

Es wird empfohlen, den Bereich nur unter Aufsicht zu befahren
Zuerst besichtigen, dann fahren
Bereich der Landung umgehend verlassen

NOTFALL Notfallnummer 144 Meine Position Bereich 6

SCAN ME Hier gehts zum Video-Tutorial mit Lucas Huppert

GRUNDREGELN

- Das Tragen von Helm und Protektoren wird empfohlen
- Die Benutzung der Anlagen erfolgt auf eigene Gefahr
- Die entsprechende Versicherung ist Sache der Benutzer:innen
- Die Betreiberin lehnt jede Haftung ab
- Die Fahrtrichtung einhalten
- Den Trail nicht verlassen
- Die offiziellen Verbindungswege nutzen
- Kenne deine Grenzen
- Nimm Rücksicht auf andere
- Respektiere die Natur
- Verlasse den Park, wie du ihn vorgefunden hast
- Der Park darf nur während den Öffnungszeiten benutzt werden > siehe Öffnungszeiten auf [swissbikepark.ch](https://www.swissbikepark.ch)

[swissbikepark.ch](https://www.swissbikepark.ch) | [#swissbikepark](https://www.instagram.com/swissbikepark)

swisscom die Mobiller UKK BKW



" OVER A TOTAL OF THREE AND HALF DAYS FILLED WITH THEORY AND PRACTICAL ASSESSMENTS YOU CAN GET TRAINED TO HEAD INTO THE WORLD AND RATE THE VARIOUS TRAILS "

As you can imagine, there is some solid experience and good judgement needed to properly rate a trail and to make sure we're all on the same page a new three level course system has been developed to train you to become a 'ITRS Certified Trail rater' (CTR). Over a total of three and half days

filled with theory and practical assessments you can get trained to head into the world and rate the various trails according to the ITRS standard.

To help the trail raters do their job and to ensure a high level of quality, the app will be used to store data like distance, gradient, altitude information, details on trail features and all the other parameters that make up the ITRS system. Each trail rated with the APP by a CTR will get an official 'ITRS Trail Certificate'. By storing this information in

the app, ITRS Level 4 Experts will be able to review the work done by the CTRs which is part of an even higher level of certification that is offered to whole destinations. This 'ITRS Destinations Certificate' also includes checks of the maintenance concept and documentation to maintain the grading of the trails.

Now I can hear you think. Wait, trail rating is a job?! Where do I sign up for that? So we jumped on a call with Mischa Crumbach, one of the people behind ITRS to see what the courses are like, how to sign up and to find out more details on ITRS.



" HE ASKED IF I WOULD PICK UP THE TASK AND I WAS SILLY ENOUGH TO SAY YES! "

Mischa, thanks for taking the time to talk to us! Before I cut to the chase on how to become a trail rater, can you tell me a little about how the ITRS idea got started and how you got involved?

Yeah sure! So it all started when I was asked for a consulting job for the development of a new bike park project – the Swiss Bike Park in Oberried near Bern. While developing the project and talking to their destination partner Davos/Klosters, the project manager noticed that there were several ways to rate a trail and he included in their funding application to a Swiss government body that they would develop a uniform trail rating system. Not being a frequent biker himself he obviously didn't know the size of that job and casually mentioned it to me, and when I questioned him on who was doing this monstrous task he asked if I would pick up the task and I was silly enough to say yes!

Haha, yeah it does seem like an enormous task with mountain biking being such a diverse sport. Until now, how many hours have roughly been spent on it?

Well, up until the first presentation at the IMBA Europe summit last year me and Edoardo Melchiori from IMBA Europe have spent about 1000 hours on developing the basics of the rating system. Once presented we were met with a lot of praise, but of course nothing is perfect first try, so we also received a lot of feedback which made us spend a good amount of time more into the project and we will keep on managing and updating it.

" IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE THINGS SAFER BY REMOVING TRAIL FEATURES OR CREATING EASIER TRAILS. "

Who do you plan to work with on this project?

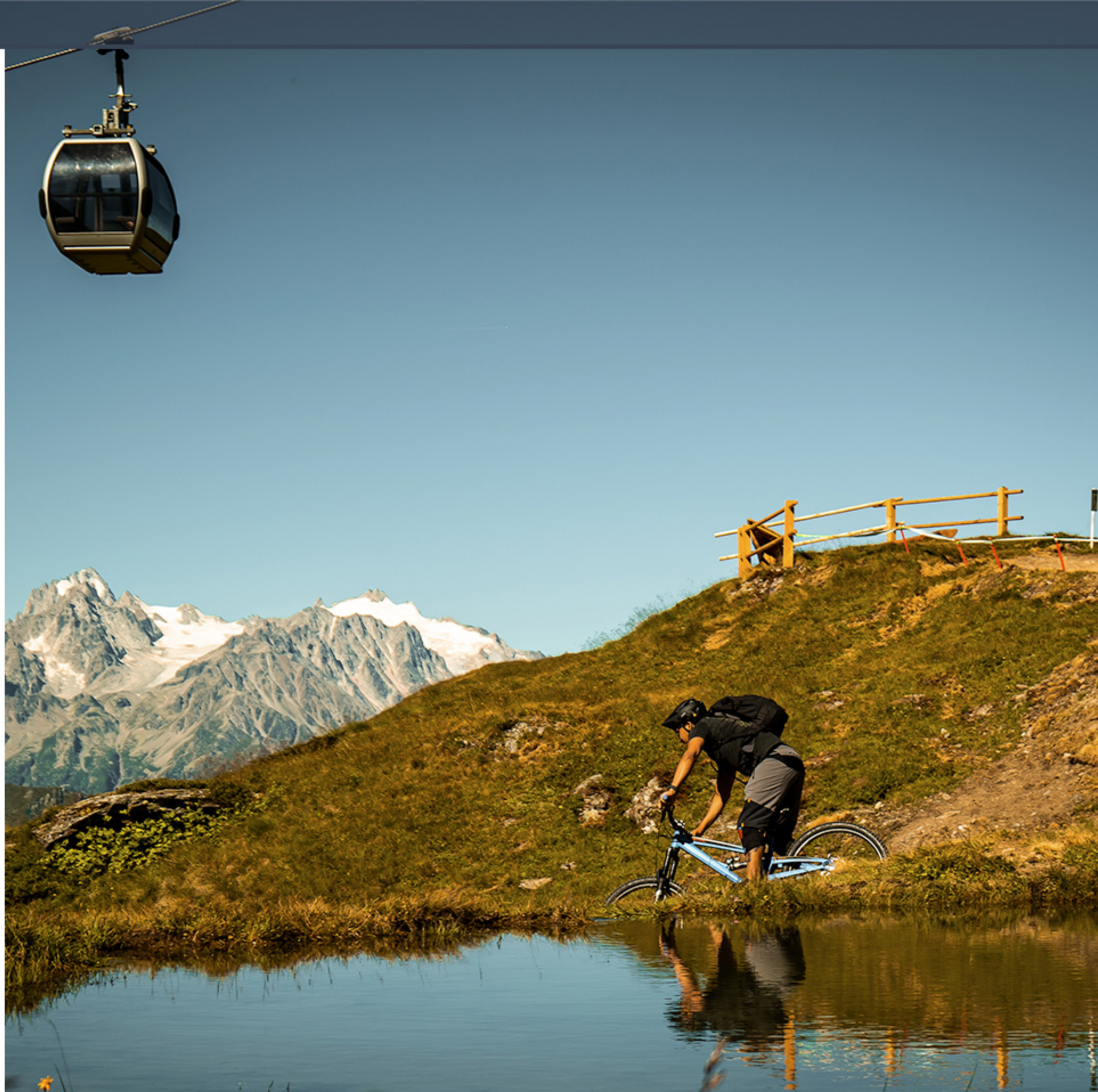
We want to work together with various partners. This can be new or already existing bikeparks, forestry commissions and local governments to help create more safety for bikers, guidelines for trail builders and help biking tourism become more attractive and structured. It's important to note that we don't want to make things safer by removing trail features or creating easier trails. Mountain biking needs to have difficult and exciting trails, we just want it to be easier to communicate and describe what people can expect.

Are you aiming to have all the current systems in place replaced by ITRS?

Well it would be amazing if that eventually happened, but I think it will be a slow process. If we can get to a point where all the new bike trails are built using the ITRS standard I'd be very happy. Then of course we can work together with existing destinations to upgrade their maps, signs and communication at the point when they are ready to have the signs replaced.

Which destinations are already working with ITRS?

Well, the initiators of the project, the Swiss Bike Park in Oberried and Klosters/Davos, have implemented the standard, and recently the Italian Lake Garda region updated all their signage on the existing routes using the ITRS system. We are also in touch with several different bikeparks and the forestry commission of Israel is interested that we come over to educate their staff so they can start working by ITRS standards.





" IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO HAVE A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF THE SKILLS LEVELS OF ALL THE BIKERS OUT THERE. "

Yeah, that seems like a pretty sweet job title 'Trail Rater'. What exactly does it entail and how do I become one?

Well, we have a 3 level course spread out over 3,5 days. Part of it is theory inside, but a big part is outside on the trail to learn to assess the various trail features out on the mountain using the trail rating app that we are developing. If you are certified as an

ITRS Trail Rater local governments, bikeparks etc can hire you to come rate their trails for them. If you use the ITRS trail rating app for the rating the trails will receive an official certificate stating the level of the trail.

Do I need any specific prior education to start the course?

Not really, but of course a decent amount of mountain biking experience is a must in order to do your job properly. You don't need to be a pro racer though. Actually, it is more important to have a solid understanding of the skills levels of all the bikers out there.

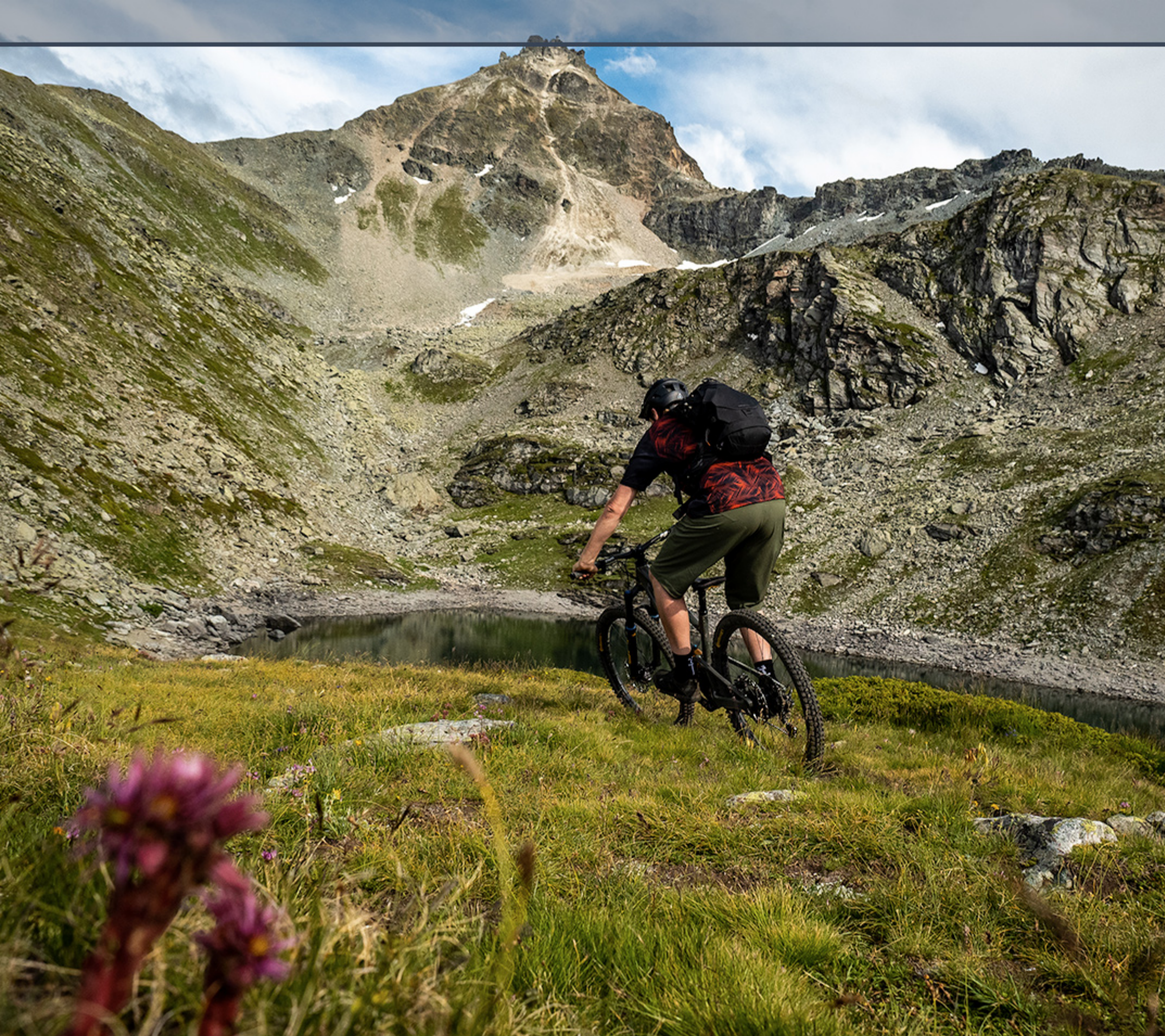
For a pro rider, basically everything is easy! Ideally, you are a guide, skill instructor or trail builder.

If people are interested, where do they sign up?

Well I think it is best for them to have a look on our website first (<https://itrs.bike/>). There they can find more information about the project and ways where to reach us. The courses are currently given in Visp Switzerland and Torino, Italy, but if there are several people interested in a certain region we can travel to any location to set up a course.

Awesome. Thanks Mischa!

No worries, my pleasure!



" I CAN TELL IT WAS AN ADVENTURE DAY THAT WAS A GREAT TEST FOR OUR FRIENDSHIP IN THE END. "

So there you have it. A huge project that can have an equally huge impact on the way trails are built, coaches teach and how riders enjoy themselves on the trails. With a more solid rating in place, more people will be able to make the right decisions and (hopefully) we will see less accidents out on the trail.

In case you were wondering how the story ended with my friend Bob? I can tell it was an adventure day that was a great test for our friendship in the end. The climb totalled at 1600m, I forgot there was an exposed hike-a-bike at the top to reach the start of the downhill, and while I was updating my swear word vocabulary Bob made some progress in overcoming his fear of heights. On the descent my mind was refreshed once again that switchbacks are an advanced technique that Bob didn't possess yet. End conclusion is that both Bob and I hope ITRS will expand quickly into the new world standard.

WORDS DOUG MCDONALD PHOTOS BASQUE MTB

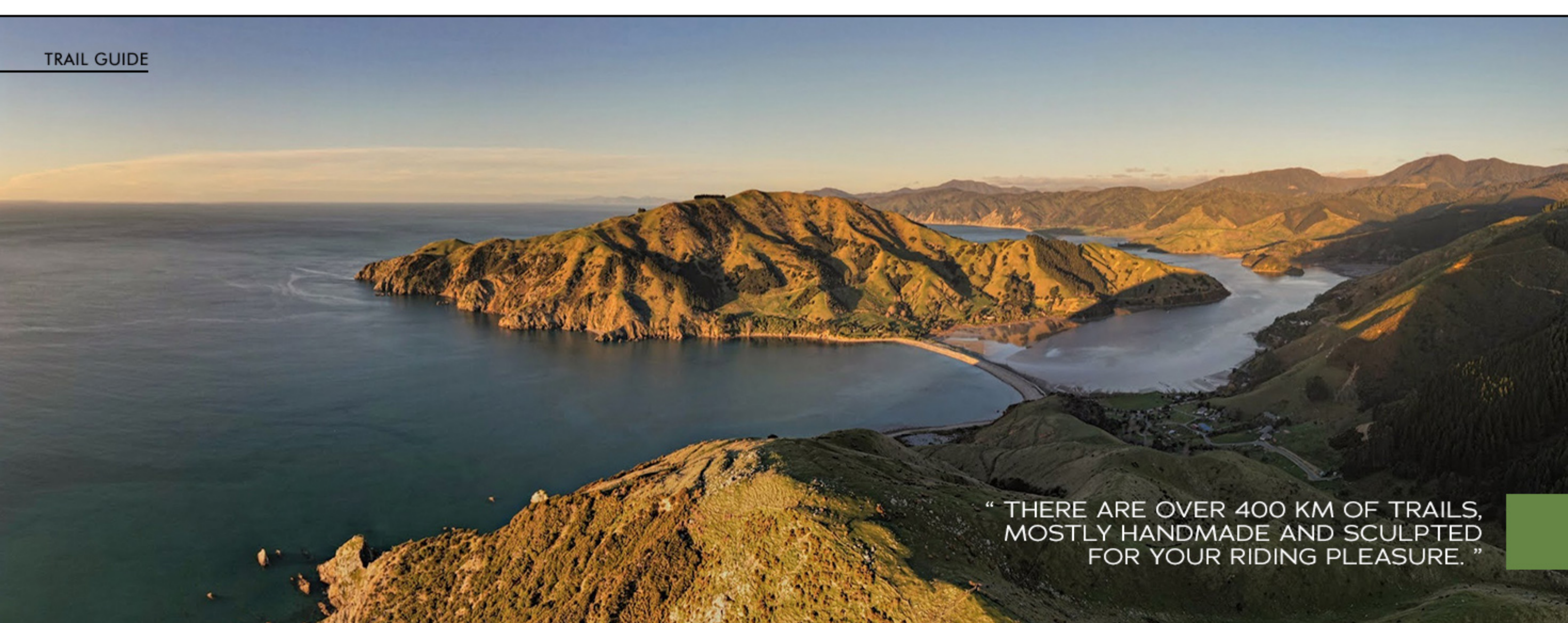
NELSON, NEW ZEALAND

Nelson, New Zealand. A quiet little town (though technically a city) of around 50,000 people nestled between three National Parks at the top of the South Island, 40 minutes flight from the capital, Wellington. In typical New Zealand style it's quite idyllic; lush rainforest-covered mountains cascade from all directions down to the crystal clear waters and golden sands of Tasman Bay. Craft breweries, characterful coffee shops, colonial British architecture, the most sunshine hours of anywhere in New Zealand. Traditionally the kind of place where 40 somethings come to raise a family and 60 somethings come to retire.



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“THERE ARE OVER 400 KM OF TRAILS,
MOSTLY HANDMADE AND SCULPTED
FOR YOUR RIDING PLEASURE.”

But just under the surface you'll find the ripples of something else. Something less expected.

A counter-culture altogether more exhilarating and, for anyone reading IMB, a whole lot more exciting. Nelson has a history of being one of the raddest places on planet Earth to ride a mountain bike - and those in the know have been coming here and having their minds blown for decades.

Let's start with some facts to qualify that outrageous claim. Nelson has the biggest mountain bike club in the world (certainly as far as ChatGPT seems to know). It's over 30 years old and has circa 3500 paid up,

active members. Within 1 hr of the centre of Nelson there are over 400 km of trails, mostly handmade and sculpted for your riding pleasure. Nelson is one of only six IMBA Gold-Rated Ride Centres in the world outside of N America. In the 90's, a very generous gentleman spent \$30m building himself a private bike park then gifted it to the Nelson MTB club and now, anyone can ride there. There are twelve bike shops and five uplift services. I could go on but you can see the foundations for future greatness are well and truly in place.

So now I've piqued your interest, whet your whistle and generally warmed you up, let's get stuck into the

main course. What's going to get Nelson on your bucket list of must visit places to experience the ultimate MTB holiday - because, let's be honest, New Zealand isn't quite-so-easy a place to get to, compared to other international destinations.

Nelson is quite a long way from, well, anywhere actually, but it's relatively easy to get to from a planning point of view. A couple of flights from almost any major city in the world, several movies and a bit of timezone hopping is all it takes to get here. Nelson's airport is the biggest regional airport in New Zealand and literally 15 minutes drive from the city centre -

so, while it is a long journey from Europe or the USA; it's a relatively simple one. A steady stream of European and USA pro riders passing through each summer filling up the top spots on local Strava segments shows it's easy enough to get here when you set your mind on it.

And once here that can be the end of the travelling until you leave if that's what you want. There's over 150km of really great trails (grade 3-6) within easy riding of the city centre. Four main zones have their own character and geography, and being mostly hand built are a step above the digger built blandness often plaguing purpose built ride centres these days:

Sharlands is probably the spiritual home of easy access riding in Nelson created over 30 years by an army of volunteers. Featuring a mix of lush native forest and pine blocks there's a rich variety of trails to explore, all less than a 20 minute ride from the city. Everything from grade 6 DH tracks to old school technical but low risk grade 4 trails that fall squarely into the 'techflow' category. Easy going forest road climbs are the primary way to gain altitude. There are 10 standout trails in there each dropping around 400/500m.

The Codgers area backs onto Sharlands and has slowly evolved into an easy access general ride zone catering to all skill levels - grade 3 to 6. With a maximum height of around 350m the trails are a collaboration between the city council and the club's volunteers and feature the majority of Nelson's flow/jump trails if that's your jam. The area has two sides, the one facing town is more beginner/family focused,

"THERE'S A RICH VARIETY OF TRAILS TO EXPLORE, ALL LESS THAN A 20 MINUTE RIDE FROM THE CITY."



“ HOW ABOUT A 32KM OFFROAD
LOOP TRAIL THAT TAKES YOU
INTO THE ALPINE ENVIRONMENT
1000M ABOVE NELSON? ”



and the side leading to Sharlands is where you'll find the more technical, natural and steeper trails.

Fancy something a bit more adventurous? How about a 32km offroad loop trail that takes you into the Alpine environment 1000m above Nelson? The Coppermine Trail is a Grade 4 very well maintained trail that initially follows the route of New Zealand's first railway up Dun Mountain before plummeting down over 12 km of flowing descent back to the Maitai River, which you then follow back to the pub/cafe/showers in town.

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“THESE TRIALS ARE A LOT OF FUN, BUT HEAD INLAND AND YOU BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE THE TRUE NATURE OF NELSON’S RIDING CHARACTER.”



And to top it all off we have the Fringed Hill riding area - the domain of those with a bit more experience and riding bikes with a bit more travel. An 800m climb up a steady gradient fire road delivers you to the top of Fringed Hill, looking almost straight down onto Nelson. Head off the seaward side and you'll be treated to several grade 4 and 5 routes back to the bottom, all well over 10 minutes long and hand built to get your juices flowing. These trials are a lot of fun, but head inland and you begin to experience the true nature of Nelson's riding character.

Black Diamond Ridge and Sunshine Ridge are the entry points to Nelson's 'easy access' trail gold. Peaking Ridge, Whaimana, Crankenstein, 629, Mutley's, Maggie's Farm - these are all hand built hero trails created to preserve the wild side of Nelson's native Beech Forest riding. Giving the impression of being at one with their natural environment the skill of the builds disguises the effort that went into making them amazing to ride. With around 600m elevation drop on each of them there is a day's worth of riding just in this area. And the best bit - you're never more than 45 minutes away from the pub. Nelson also happens to be the epicentre of NZ Craft brewing, and is well as world-renowned for its wines - helped by the Mediterranean climate which whilst being perfect for riding, is ideal for growing hops and grapes.

Nelson city has at least a full week's worth of riding and 15,000m of descending all within a 10km radius of Nelson's centre. For the fit and keen pedalling is no real hassle with a variety of easy fireroad access trails and dedicated singletrack climbs, but there's also a range of high quality shuttle services running from town that make things a whole lot less draining (and arguably more fun).



“ MTB TRAILS WINDING DOWN THROUGH 1500-YEAR-OLD NATIVE RAINFOREST, WITH VIEWS OVER THE BLUE WATERS OF TASMAN BAY. ”



E-bikes are also very welcome on all of Nelson's trails and make a lot of sense if you want to maximise your descending time.

The next layer of Nelson's riding onion is a 20-30 minute drive from the city centre - which will see you being introduced to the Cable Bay Adventure Park, Richmond Hills and Silvan Forest areas. Cable Bay in particular is somewhere you'll want to spend at least a full day, probably two. Privately run the park is home to a range of outdoor activities, its MTB trails winding down through 1500-year-old native rainforest, with views over the blue waters of Tasman Bay.

The riding here is sublime - there's not much else we can say. Ranging from grade 3-6 there are around 50km of descending trails to enjoy, each one hand built by the small army of 30+ volunteers that get together each week to build, maintain and generally fluff the land into peak trail riding heaven. Climbing is relaxed and shady, but you can also book a private shuttle or jump on the regular scheduled shuttles that run several times a week that will take you up the hill for only \$10. Cable Bay was chosen as the venue for the inaugural NZ National Enduro Championships this year, and racer feedback was off the charts.

It's free to ride there - but why not take \$20 and have a beer and a feed at the base cafe as a way of saying thanks to the owners Richard and Elina. Like everywhere around here, you'll soon be on first-name terms with everyone you'll meet.

While Nelson is a single venue holiday dream, dealing up more riding variety and volume than you could fit into a one week visit, it would be a real shame if you didn't head off for at least one backcountry adventure to switch things up. Luckily there's a Landcruiser or helicopter just waiting to transport you to the start of a truly memorable experience.

Crisscrossed by old pioneer pack trails, and surrounded by the start of the Southern Alps, the Nelson Region has a reputation for assisted backcountry adventure riding, and the best way to the top is by helicopter. This can be rather pricey as a one-off charter but if you plan ahead you might jump in with a larger group; which brings the costs down. Choose this option and you can arrive on a 1500m+ peak with nothing but a vaguely marked singletrack trail inviting you to get back to our sports roots and have a two wheeled gravity assisted adventure. Routes to choose from include some you might have seen Brendan Fairclough, Jesse Melamed or Bernard Kerr post about in the past as regular Nelson visitors. Real 'bucket list' stuff but easily accessible from Nelson, and can be relatively inexpensive if you line it up through the right channels.

If it's multi-day adventure rides that tick your boxes, Nelson is a great base for these, too. NZ has invested millions of dollars to create a series of 'great rides'; point-to-point backcountry routes with overnight mountain hut stopovers. Two gems that are within easy striking distance of Nelson are The Old Ghost Road (85km) and The Paparoa Track (55km). We advise booking your hut early since they are often oversubscribed.

What does that leave us with? Well, I guess there's the Billionaire's private bike we mentioned earlier? What's that? You don't have one of those in your local town, too? Wairoa Gorge Bike Park, almost mythical thanks to its backstory and the unique quality of the riding, it's seen its fair share of visiting pros and Youtube specials over the years.



“ IF IT'S MULTI-DAY ADVENTURE RIDES
THAT TICK YOUR BOXES, NELSON IS
A GREAT BASE FOR THESE ”



While this amazing spot nestled in a secluded river gorge around 50 minutes drive from Nelson has a reputation as a tough place to ride the club has spent years polishing some of the easier trails to make it a great venue for riders of all skill levels, no matter what age. There are daily shuttles running (no uphill riding here) and there are also two on-site accommodation options, the functional Barriers Lodge and 'Eagles Nest' style luxury accommodation at Gibbs Hut. A trip to The Gorge is a very special experience for the mind, body and soul.

Take your time, soak it all in, and make sure you have a fresh set of brake pads because you're going to be doing thousands of metres of descending!

While this article is about introducing you to the hidden riding gem that is Nelson and the unique flavour of a holiday here I would just give a nod to our South Island neighbours who also have a lot to offer. Kaiteriteri, Craigieburn, Middle Hill, Christchurch, Queenstown, Alexandria, Dunedin. If you have time I would highly recommend adding

another 7 day road trip to your plans - start in Nelson, get a hire van and make your way down to Dunedin sampling the very best MTB riding New Zealand has to offer. No more than one day's drive in-between each stop it's a trip you'll never forget (or get tired telling you mates and family about). Real bucket list stuff. This is a controversial comment, but honestly, I wouldn't worry too much about skipping the North Island altogether. Every venue listed here is unique, welcoming and well worth a visit.



BLATANT PLUG FOR THE NZ MTB RALLY

Nelson will take centre stage to an original 6-Day Enduro-Adventure launching in March 2024. The NZ MTB Rally is a whole week of racing across the Top of the South Island, in a circular route that starts and finishes in Nelson but loops out deep into the region's backcountry. Organiser Ali Jamieson (the man behind The Trans-Savoie (France) and Enduro2 Pairs-Format Series) is promising to take things to the next level with quite the logistical masterpiece: Heli-Drops, Boat-Access, and 4x4 shuttles are all incorporated into the week, limited to 120 participants. We even plan to head down to NZ ourselves to get involved in this one, so watch this space for our full review in IMB next year. (www.nzmtbrally.com)

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Shuttles: Nelson City: Gravity Nelson |
Backcountry: Scottish Express

Bike Shops: Bike Station | EVO Cycles | Village Cycles | Torpedo 7

Accommodation: Budget: Prince Albert Backpackers | Mid-Range: Whare Iti | Premium: Hardy School House

Food: Street Food on Washington

Pub: Spring & Fern Brewery Milton St

Heli-Drops: Helibike Nelson

Guided Tours & Route Advice: trailAddiction

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Paul Jennings washed up on New Zealand's shores 16 years ago, drawn here by the mountain biking, sunshine and natural beauty of Nelson. Rumour has it he placed 5th at the '92 Olympics, is a Commonwealth Games medalist and was national champion 10 times back in the UK, but you can't believe everything you read on the internet. Paul is former president of the Nelson MTB club, but these-days can more often be spotted in wig and moustache disguise taking the sneaky E-bike option up the hill (primarily so he has extra time to enjoy a second round of cake & coffee, at the end of the ride).

" IF IT'S MULTI-DAY ADVENTURE RIDES THAT TICK YOUR BOXES, NELSON IS A GREAT BASE FOR THESE "



A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a dark t-shirt, is working on a bicycle frame in a workshop. He is holding a large, curved metal piece, likely a fender or a part of the frame, and is using a tool to work on it. The background is dark and out of focus, showing various workshop equipment and tools. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's face and the metal piece he is working on.

WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND
PHOTOS INVISIFRAME

BEHIND THE BRAND: INVISIFRAME

From kitchen table hobby to global brand in a decade

We've all been there, razzing down a rock strewn singletrack at Mach 1. Full focus on the trail and not a single worry on your mind. At those speeds you don't think about work, mortgage payments or any impending doom that you can imagine. Right up until the moment you hear that loud, nasty TIC! The sound of pebble (or rock) spinning from the front tire right into the downtube of your precious frame. Heart rates spike and your mind gets filled with conflicting thoughts. You need to stop to check out the damage, but you don't want to stop and check the damage.



" CHUFFED WITH HIS NEW PRIDE AND JOY, HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE TO PROTECT IT FROM THE ELEMENTS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. "

Ten years ago, this nightmare scenario was running through the mind of Lee as he was looking at the brand new shiny Yeti Carbon bike that he just bought. It was one of those 'my bank says no, but I'm buying it anyway' moves, purchasing a vehicle for joy and escape with the support of 0% finance. Chuffed with his new pride and joy, he wanted to make sure to protect it from the elements as much as possible.

As Lee was working in the automotive vinyl wrapping business, he decided to use some clear vinyl wrap to protect his frame. Being the perfectionist that he is, he spent a lot of time on the details to make sure 99% of the frame was covered and protected. Not an easy feat with the complexity of a full suspension mountain bike.

When showing up at his local riding spot his friends were in awe of the job he had done and obviously the first thing they asked was: "can you make a kit for my bike?" So, the kitchen table got cleared and he spent evenings and weekends making kits for friends as a side project next to a fulltime job.

One of his good friends is Sandy Plenty, owner of the legendary Trailhead bike shop in Shrewsbury. He immediately saw the value in the invisiframe kits. Not only was it a good item to sell with every new bike he sold, it also made it a lot easier for him to trade in and re-sell second hand rides. Basically once you peeled off the invisiframe kit, you'd find the frame underneath was in an immaculate condition.



CHAOS IN THE KITCHEN

The idea caught on quickly, and soon Lee's house was filled with customers' bikes waiting to be 'invisiFRAME d'. With the expansion of the family with two kids, there was no extra room in the house for his 'hobby'. So for the first few years it was the kitchen and living room that acted as the headquarters and production hall.

" SOON LEE'S HOUSE
WAS FILLED WITH
CUSTOMERS' BIKES
WAITING TO BE
'INVISIFRAME D' "



THE ART OF PROTECTION



PROTECTION IS NOT
A FUNCTION,
IT'S A **MASTERPIECE**





" IN ORDER TO HAVE THE HIGHEST QUALITY COVERAGE POSSIBLE, THE DESIGN PHASE MAKES THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE "

At the same time, riders, shops and bike brands caught on to invisifRAME s' products. Many brands decided to kit out their demo fleets to make sure they stayed looking fresh, and several shops started copying The Trailheads strategy for improving their second hand sales.

In order to have the highest quality coverage possible, the design phase makes the biggest difference. Lee would spend hours on figuring out the best shapes and cuts to make for covering the frames and when a new model was released, he was calling distributors and shops around the country to get his hands on a frame so he could create the template.

Although great when looking back at those first few years, it was a milestone once

invisifRAME managed to get a separate facility. This not only freed up some extra living space in the house, but also gave space to invest in better equipment to be able to produce more kits in a shorter amount of time.

STEALING WORKFORCE FROM THE NHS

The business kept on growing, and these days he is in close contact with all the major brands. On many occasions, he will already receive information and dimensions of the new models even prior to them being released to the general public.



This amount of success does come with a price, and at one point he could no longer manage the entire business by himself. His wife Vicky, until then a nurse with the NHS, decided to make the leap and jump to the rescue. Taking over the day-to-day operations of the business, her entry to the company gave Lee more time to work on what he loves most, the design and improvement of the product.

After being a full time nurse and mother for several years, managing a company comes as second nature. She quickly realized that it would take more people to keep invisiframe growing and hired friends and relatives to keep the wheels in motion.

" HER ENTRY TO
THE COMPANY
GAVE LEE MORE
TIME TO WORK
ON WHAT HE
LOVES MOST "

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" INVISIFRAME IS STILL GOING STRONG AND THIS YEAR THEY SET UP A PARTNERSHIP WITH XPEL "

With more people than ever with the company, it was time to expand the range of products. Besides the proven self healing frame protection adhesives, nowadays invisifRAME is a large player in bike customisation. Offering frame and fork decals in many different color options to customize your ride. And if you can't find what you're looking for, you can always email their graphics department directly with your idea. They love a custom challenge!

PATH TO WORLD DOMINATION

A decade in, invisifRAME is still going strong and this year they set up a partnership with XPEL, a global player in the paint protection industry. XPEL is the leading brand in the automotive industry, supplying protective films for super cars, Indycars, Nascars and other racing vehicles. Not only will invisifRAME benefit from the latest technologies in water and dirt repellent self healing films, but they will also have access to XPEL's global network of distributors and dealers, invisifRAME will now be able to supply their products worldwide.

Currently Invisiframe counts about 10 employees, but over time it is sure to expand even further. One thing that will not change is Lee handling the R&D and engineering side of the business, and his wife Vicky steering the ship.





HAIBIKE HQ

WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND PHOTOS HAIBIKE

Beep beep beep goes the alarm clock. It's 5am on a Wednesday and it's time to jump in the car to the airport. A 9:15 flight sounds like a reasonable time to fly, but factor in the security ports, passport control, a 1,5h drive to the airport and suddenly you are standing next to your bed before sunrise.

" HAIBIKE WAS CONSTANTLY ON THE FOREFRONT
PIONEERING FULL SUSPENSION MODELS, E-ROAD
BIKES AND A TECHNIQUE CALLED 'GRAVITY CASTING' "

Don't get me wrong, I am an early riser in general and when there is a bike trip involved I'll hop out of bed with ease. Especially after a long time of 'online product releases' I am more than stoked to go to new places and meet some new people. And of course ride some cool bikes!

HISTORY

Founded in 1995, Haibike started out as part of Winora, a company that has been making bicycles in the German town of Schweinfurt since 1921. Integrated into the Accel group since 2001, the main focus of Haibike has always been innovation and sports oriented bikes. In the 2012 Olympics the German Sabine Spitz managed a silver medal on her Haibike and it was around this time that the first E-bikes started emerging onto the market.

A firm believer in E bikes from the start, Haibike was constantly on the forefront pioneering full suspension models, e-road bikes and a technique called 'gravity casting' which allowed them to produce highly complicated frame shapes with incredibly tight tolerances. This made mounting e-bike motors and batteries possible at a large scale production.

In 2018 they launched their Xduro bike. Until this moment e-bikes were mainly aimed at commuters and leisure riders but the 180mm travel beast of a machine brought the technology to the attention of the more extreme mountain bikers, tapping into a whole new market.





" THIS LOCATION ALSO HOLDS STOCK FOR SISTER COMPANY WIENER BIKE PARTS, ONE OF EUROPE'S LARGEST WHOLESALERS. WITH OVER 25.000 DIFFERENT BIKE PARTS IN STOCK, THE OPERATION IS GIGANTIC. "

If you look closely at their catalogue today, you will see there is not a single 'acoustic' bike in their line up. They are 100% committed to e-bikes and are still pushing the envelope today with new concepts developed together with their ambassadors, dealers and customers.

LOGISTICS

The flight into Frankfurt is a straightforward job, and after a short wait for some other guests we make our way over to Schweinfurt where we meet up with Gareth from Haibike UK and Matthias the Brand Manager. As we're a little on the late side we jump straight into the warehouse tour.

Besides hosting the brand new Haibike showroom and training facility, this location also holds stock for sister company Wiener Bike Parts, one of Europe's largest wholesalers. With over 25.000 different

bike parts in stock, the operation is gigantic.

As we move through the various halls and storage areas, we're explained that this facility has been growing for decades in line with the business. As the business grew larger and larger, the neighbouring buildings, offices and warehouses were bought and converted to house Haibike and Wiener Bike Parts.

The result is an impressive maze full of bike parts. As we wind through the buildings I notice that none of the items are in any logical order. After asking about it, the explanation seems logical. Items are stored in the most space efficient way possible, all determined by computer software. Orders are processed and packed within 24 hours and shipped Europe wide.



" IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE BRAND AND GET SOME MORE INFORMATION FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH. "

The coolest machine in the warehouse is definitely the 'automated boxing machine'. Just scan the order, put the items onto the machine and it will measure, cut, fold and label the package in seconds. Not only is this lightning fast, but it also reduces cardboard use by almost 50%.

Last stop on the tour is the Haibike Workshop. The bike mechanics dream! These days it is mainly used for building photo samples, prototypes and the odd pre production bike as the main assembly of Haibikes are done in a different location. Still, they kept this part of the workshop as they wanted to be able to stay flexible and have a proper facility on site.

DAY 2

With the delays of day 1 our program for day 2 got a lot busier. After breakfast we head straight to the brand new Haibike training facility, a 3000m² showroom with a presentation area to show off bikes, kit and technology. It's always nice to speak to the people behind the brand and get some more information from the horse's mouth.

A dozen slideshows later, it's time for the best bit of the trip. Riding bikes! We make our way to the demo area and get the bikes dialled in and set up. I have the latest version of Haibike's lightweight E-MTB, the Lyke, waiting for me (see the full review in the Tried and Tested section of IMB 76). Tricked out with XTR brakes, carbon wheels and Sram's brand new XX Eagle groupset this is a dream machine!

" WE HAVE A FULL SCHEDULE AND LIMITED TIME TO RIDE. WE MANAGE TO RAZZ AROUND FOR ALMOST 3 HOURS BEFORE WE HEAD BACK TO HQ. "

As we head out of the industrial area towards the trails, I get familiar with the fresh ride. This is the first time I am able to use the Fazua Ride60 system and the first thing I notice is that it is really silent. You can barely hear the motor purring and with 60Nm there is plenty of torque on the steeps.

Riding in the area is surprisingly fun. No it's not a proper bike park or trail centre, but in the woods right next to Haibike HQ there are tons of trails that link together like a big singletrack maze. Some fast, some more technical and all a blast on the Lyke. We even come across a jumpline which we hit a couple times in a row, because that's what e-bikes are good at right?

Weighing in at just over 18kg the Lyke handles like a normal bike, but it still allows you to blast up the hills like with a 'proper' e-mtb. Perfect for a day like this where we have a full schedule and limited time to ride. We manage to razz around for almost 3 hours before we head back to HQ. Just as I turn onto the Haibike HQ compound my battery dies, after about 900m of climbing and about 40 km distance. As we were blasting around in Turbo mode for 90% of the time these numbers are very impressive!

WARP SPEED

After a power shower and hearty lunch we take a tour through their 2024 embargoed showroom. Sadly I can't share any of the news I saw up there at this moment, but I can say the future is bright and Haibike has got some amazing new products lined up.





" AT SOME POINTS ON THE GERMAN MOTORWAYS, THERE IS NO SPEED LIMIT. IT SURE MAKES AN OTHERWISE MUNDANE COMMUTE FEEL LIKE A DISNEY ATTRACTION "

With my flight leaving early evening, it's time to hop into the van for a high speed transfer to Frankfurt Airport. As most of you know at some points on the German motorways, there is no speed limit. It sure makes an otherwise mundane commute feel like a Disney attraction when you are swooshing on the Autobahn at 220 km/h! Didn't even know these vans could go this fast.

Needless to say we arrived in time for our flight and before I knew it I woke up in my own bed again. A great experience and impressive operation they have, I can't wait to show some of the 2024 highlights with you in future issues.

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CRAGS & SLABS

Embrace the Rock n Roll

Bedrock, boulders, and slick slabs of stone are some of the key elements that make up the quintessential mountain bike experience. For those of you who are lucky enough to live in such areas, these staple trail elements are less demanding. But as many riders live miles away from the mountains, some of you may find yourself getting in above your head when coming across these types of features. But, fear not, as we will help you ride rocks with added confidence, drop slabs with style and master the world of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic matter.

Let's start by looking at some of the common problems you are likely to encounter when dealing with rocky ground.

1. Getting hung up/stalling out on a boulder, crag, or face in the bedrock.
2. Smashing pedals and cranks on big rocks and bedrock.
3. Being pushed off-line by sloping rocks, ridges in bedrock, and off-cambers in slabs and crags.
4. Loss of traction creating wheel spin (the turbo trainer moment).
5. Loss of traction due to loose material on the rock.

" WHAT CAN WE DO TO SHARPEN OUR SKILLS IF WE LIVE IN AN AREA WHERE THERE ARE NO ROCKS "

So how can we eliminate some of these classic errors and what can we do to sharpen our skills if we live in an area where there are no rocks to play on?

First up getting hung up, this typically happens when you have a lack of momentum or you have failed to unweight or lift a wheel. Every face and edge in the rock is robbing your speed, only the sweet little back slopes will give you an added boost of momentum. Not to sound like a broken record but vision is key, looking ahead and reading the type of rock you are passing over will help you set your speed and select your line.

Rounded rocks will also hinder your progress, washed rocks like this are also more likely to push you off-line. Speed control is key but having the right dose of momentum will only get you so far,





" WE CAN HELP ELIMINATE THAT COMMON MISTAKE NUMBER 2, SMASHING PEDALS AND CRANKS "

if you sit rigid on the bike then you stand a greater chance of getting hung up, stand up, and unweight the wheels when coming into contact with larger edges. At slower speeds, even small edges will want to rob your speed, when crawling through rocky ground at slow speeds pay attention to those smaller hits. If you are grinding up a steep rock slab you may need to pull a small wheelie to

clear cracks and ridges in the bedrock or slab, typically you will be standing up for maximum power so make sure you practice wheelies while standing up as well as seated.

You will be presented with rocky outcrops that require you to go up and over them, blind crests need approaching with care as there may be un-rollable terrain beyond the feature, if in doubt have a look first. A common mistake on up-and-over features is a lack of commitment on the approach, don't be shy here, give it a boost on the way into

the feature as it is easier to slow the bike on the crest rather than have to pedal at the peak of the outcrop. If the transition onto the rocks isn't that smooth then you will have to unweight the front wheel to make it, on severe transitions and steep gradients will mean that both wheels will need to be lifted up onto the feature.

By doing the speed work on the approach we can help eliminate that common mistake number 2, smashing pedals and cranks. When your speed is robbed by those cheeky rocks then you will have to drive the cranks around, we can deploy mindful revolutions of the cranks in key clear space,



knowing where you are in the crank stroke will help you match the gear ratio to avoid having the cranks in the vertical at just the wrong time. More often than not in rocky terrain you need to drive a slightly larger gear to avoid having the cranks in the vertical too frequently.

" GETTING TO KNOW YOUR DRIVE SYSTEM WILL HELP YOU PRE-EMPT THAT DELAY "

This obviously requires strength and stamina so spinning that gear like some celebrity cyclist all the time will do you no favors in the world of crags and slabs. Mix up your cadence so you can swap styles to suit the terrain, read the trail ahead by looking up and not into the feature to enable you to set your speed and select the right gear. There is a delay in the engagement of the freehub, cheaper hubs will have a greater delay over the more expensive after-market versions, this is one reason they cost a great deal more. Getting to know your drive system will help you pre-empt that delay, using a gear ratio that is too small combined with that delay may mean you are pushing on the pedals for as much as a quarter of a pedal stroke before anything happens! As you can now visualize this takes the crank from horizontal (coasting into the rocks) to vertical (loss of speed and need to pedal).

This is really common on eBikes as the process is exacerbated by the delay in the speed and torque sensors engaging the motor, the other consideration on eBikes is the over-run having delivered a shot of power, get ready for that boost of speed as you stop pedalling. Sometimes a cheeky little backpedal can help engage the freewheel sooner, this also gives you a longer driving stroke on the crank before you pedal back to maintain clearance between shiny bits and mother earth.



Working on unweighting the wheels can also help to avoid that crank-smashing moment, when you are pinched and can not pedal you can often unweight the bike and lift it through the gap before getting back on the power. The unweighting trick can also be the savior in scenario 3 so it is a good thing to work on.

In scenario 3 rocks push us offline, as I have written in the past line choice should be visualised but not set in stone (if you pardon the pun). Having a rigid thought/visualisation process will only lead to disappointment and skin loss, you have to be flexible in both body and mind. As sure as eggs are eggs you will have to re-plot your desired line having slid or being nudged from your first choice.

" YOU CAN
OFTEN
UNWEIGHT
THE BIKE AND
LIFT IT
THROUGH
THE GAP "

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5 STAR RATED APP
IT'S TOTALLY FREE TO USE!



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CLICK THE LOGO
TO DOWNLOAD IT NOW!

Your new trajectory will one day be unsavoury and an inevitable collision course will be on the cards, if you can react quick enough then by unweighting the bike that inevitable wheel smashing skull cracking hit can be eliminated. Your problems may not be over at this point as more hazards ensue, this will require further nerves of steel and cool calm collected responses from mind and body. Easier said than done but at all costs don't fret, being relaxed will often see things come back to a more savoury outcome. I hasten to add however that in these types of scenarios, there is a distinct difference between cool calm collected pilots and rag-doll passengers. Rag dolling through a section and living to tell the tale comes down to luck and not skill, and yes one day that luck will run out. Unstitching errors and taking control of a situation comes with direct experience, that involves practice, patience, and persistence.

" THERE IS NO WAY AROUND IT, YOU HAVE TO PUT YOURSELF IN HARM'S WAY TO EXPERIENCE SUCH THINGS "

There is no way around it, you have to put yourself in harm's way to experience such things. A calm mind is the product of practice and exposure to situations, the body may appear to be relaxed but like a ballet dancer or Shaolin monk, there is strength to the grace of movement, direct experience and cross-training are key to achieving this.

The big Turbo Trainer moment is a result of a loss of traction, maybe you have too much diesel or the terrain is green and slippery, either way, forward progression is inhibited and chances are your trajectory has changed or you are going down.





" LEARNING TO READ THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT WILL BETTER PREPARE YOU FOR THE TRAIL AHEAD AND ENABLE YOU TO PREDICT THE GRIP LEVELS. "

The new kids on the block in the MTB tyre game have a fitting slogan "Power is nothing without control".

Learning to feel the grip through the drive system is our first port of call in calming the wheel spin on slippery rocks, alongside this technique we need to learn to recognise

when a surface will offer grip and when a surface will induce slip. Different rock types and their surrounding vegetation will offer various levels of traction, in dank woodland and especially where rocks are smooth traction will be minimal, the same rock type on a sun-soaked day may offer up enough traction for you to get the grip required to stick to the slope.

Thanks to the way the world was formed you will probably encounter different rock types in one section of trail, grippy granite dragged down the mountain and dropped

from glaciers may litter an area of rounded rocks where that glacier once ran in the form of a river. One section you pass over will have grip levels beyond measure and just around the corner, you may be presented with slick smooth polished bedrock surfaces that offer little to no adhesion even on those sun-soaked days. Learning to read the surrounding environment will better prepare you for the trail ahead and enable you to predict the grip levels. Tyre selection and pressure can always be modified to improve traction, just don't forget that you will compromise rolling resistance and puncture protection in the process.



Where loose material is strewn amongst larger rocks and bedrock then line choice will play a big part in your approach to the section. Pre-empt the movement and position the wheels so there is always something to hook the tyres on and deflect you in the desired trajectory. This element of predictability to the scenario means that you can adapt lines to suit, the one nightmare you may face is that perfect size and shaped rock that ends up under the front wheel.

" THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR TIME ON THE BIKE AND NO SUCH THING AS 'NATURAL TALENT'. "

Again strong and supple is the key. Keeping the head up and looking through the section is the big saving action to reinforce with your inner dialog, that front wheel will grip up again but be ready to ease on the leaning and steering as the front wheel rolls out from under you. A quick 'dab' from a foot may also be needed and this is why I am a firm believer in perfecting your footwork, especially the technique of switch stance (riding with a lead foot on the outside radius of a curve). Just remember that with all scenarios including crags and slabs that practice makes permanent, there is no substitute for time on the bike and no such thing as 'natural talent'. Those who appear to be 'gifted' are just the product of exceptional circumstances.

Clive Forth
www.mtbskills.co.uk

TRIED AND TESTED

We took Haibikes brand new lightweight E-MTB the Lyke for a test, and got our hands on the exclusive Unno Burn! Furthermore we try out the Velocirax 7x bike rack, ION's K-Pact AMP HD knee pads and Squirts biodegradable cleaner.

BIKES

Haibike Lyke CF SE

Unno Burn Race

ACCESSORIES

ION K-Pact AMP HD

Velocirax 7x

Squirt biodegradable cleaner



WORDS AND PHOTOS IMB TEST TEAM
PHOTO THIS PAGE JARNO HOOGLAND

BRAND HAIBIKE

MODEL LYKE CF SE

YEAR 2023

" ANOTHER BIG PLUS FOR THE ADVENTURERS AMONGST US! "

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Haibike

Model: Lyke CF SE

Price: GBP 9999 (starting from 5899 GBP)

The Lyke is Haibike's lightweight 140/140mm travel E-MTB. Equipped with the Fazua Ride 60 motor, 430Wh battery and a carbon frame, it is one of the lightest machines on the market.

THE PRODUCT

The Lyke is available at three different price points, but it is important to note that frame and electrical components on all three bikes are the same. The main changes are on the component specs, shaving off some weight and improving overall performance.

When we look at the frame, there is a full carbon frame with 140mm of travel and a lot of cool technology. The wishbone style rocker helps isolate any sideways flex towards the rear damper, this greatly improves the way the suspension works out on the trail and increases bearing and bushing life in general.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



BRAND UNNO

MODEL BURN

YEAR 2023

"FOR ANYONE
LOOKING FOR A
HEAD TURNER
THAT LOVES
RIDING STEEPS
AND RAIL
BERMS"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Unno

Model: Burn

Price: 3995 EUR frame or from 8395 EUR complete

The Burn is Unno's answer to the demand for a high end, exclusive 160mm travel enduro machine. With a unique look and well thought out design the Spanish brand has created a showstopper.

THE PRODUCT

For those around long enough to remember the early days of World Cup DH racing, the name of Cesar Rojo should ring a bell. Currently the engineer and mastermind behind the Unno brand, but back in the day he was a fierce contender for the podium.

With the Burn, Unno designed an enduro frame from the ground up. It had to be a bike that loves demanding and big hitting trails, the stuff that makes you wear your full face. There are three sizes available, offering the bike to riders from 160cm up to 195 cm. Instead of the traditional S, M and L Unno opted to go for S1, S2 and S3.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BRAND ION

MODEL K-PACT AMP HD

YEAR 2023

" THESE PADS
WILL OFFER A
GREAT AMOUNT
OF PROTECTION,
WHILE STILL
BEING VERY
COMFORTABLE. "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: ION

Model: K-Pact AMP HD

Price: EUR 169

The K-Pact Amp HD is the top-tier knee pad of ION. The SAS Tec pad is extended lower down onto the shin and the Power_slide caps on the knee enhance durability. The angular cut and pre-shaped ergonomic fit enhance comfort. On top, the strategically placed Ergo_Strap Velcro above the calf muscle allows you to find the perfect fit.

THE PRODUCT

ION makes some very high quality protection and their top of the range K-Pact Amp HD is the creme de la creme when it comes to knee protection. With a slightly longer fit compared to the regular K-Pact pads, they offer more protection to the upper part of the shin.

Your kneecaps are protected by the Power Slide caps, a hard plastic material that reduces friction when you crash. To make sure they stay in place no matter what there are velcro straps on the upper leg as well as just above the calf.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



BRAND VELOCIRAX

MODEL 7 RACK

YEAR 2023

"HAVING A BIKE RACK WHERE THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF SCRATCHES AND TRANSPORT DAMAGE IS BRILLIANT."

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Velocirax

Model: 7

Price: 995 USD

Velocirax makes vertical bike racks for 2 to 7 bikes. With the integrated hydraulic dampers, there is no need to lift the bikes into the rack, making loading and unloading a breeze.

THE PRODUCT

The Velocirax 7 is the model that carries the most amount of bikes we could find on the market and the only one using a hydraulics system to help loading and unloading. With a 10 inch spacing in between the bikes there is plenty of space so the bikes don't touch each other, preventing transport damage.

To hold the bikes in place you use UV resistant rubber straps. As they only touch your tires/rims there is zero chance of scratches. Great news with bike prices of 5k or more being the norm these days. For those that don't need to transport a huge amount of bikes, there are options for 3,4,5 and 6 bikes available too, using the same hydraulics system.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



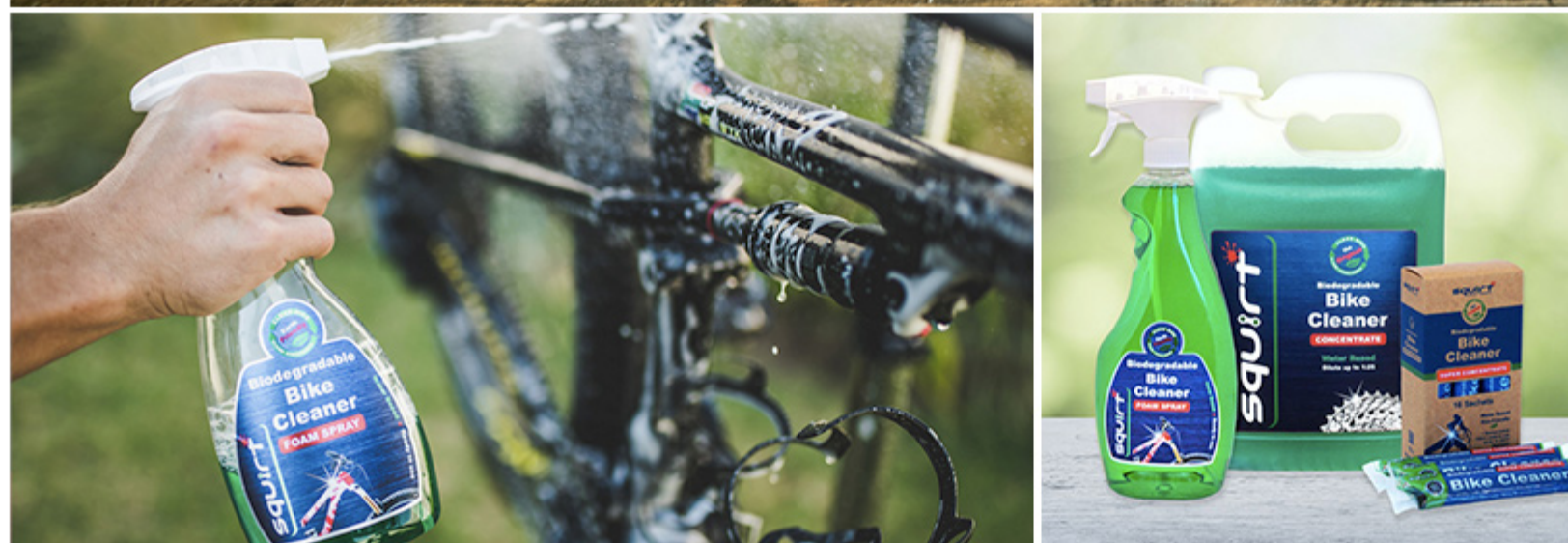
BRAND SQUIRT

MODEL BIKE CLEANER

YEAR 2023

" DOES WHAT IT
SAYS ON THE TIN
FOR A REALLY
GOOD PRICE
TOO. "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Squirt

Model: Bike Cleaner

Price: EUR 19.99

Squirt Biodegradable Bike Cleaner is an effective, mild degreaser and bike wash for proper cleaning that is not harmful. It contains no free caustic, is biodegradable and non-corrosive. Available as a 5-litre Concentrate, 30 ml Super Concentrate and Ready-to-use spray.

THE PRODUCT

Besides making some of the best chain lube out there, South African based Squirt Cycling Products also make a great bike cleaner, which can also be used in its concentrated form as a degreaser.

Their formula is biodegradable and non corrosive, so can be used on all parts of your bike no matter what frame material.

Each sachet contains 30 ml of concentrate, which makes 750ml of bike cleaner or 200ml of degreaser. The box which retails for just under 20 Euros has 10 sachets in them, so you end up with about 7,5 litres of bike cleaner.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

LIGHTBOX

ORBEA'S FLO ESPINEIRA RIPPING IN DERBY



Lightbox More shots with no particular place
to go this issue, feast your eyes!



KELEND HAWKS STYLING IN THE JUNGLE

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

SUNSET SHREDS ON THE PIVOT MACH4SL

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

GLACIER VIEWS FOR LUDO MAY



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

KONA CORNERING



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

HANS REY DOING HANS REY THINGS



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

ICELAND TURNS BY DAN MILNER

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

MARCUS RIGA SHOWING THE SLAYER IN ITS ELEMENT



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

TAHNEE SEAGRAVE OUTPACING THE CAMERA



Lightbox



Lightbox

Lightbox

KRIS KYLE FLIPPING THE DAY AWAY

The IMB website is crammed with news and videos every day, we only show the best videos, so to make it onto the site is an achievement in itself.

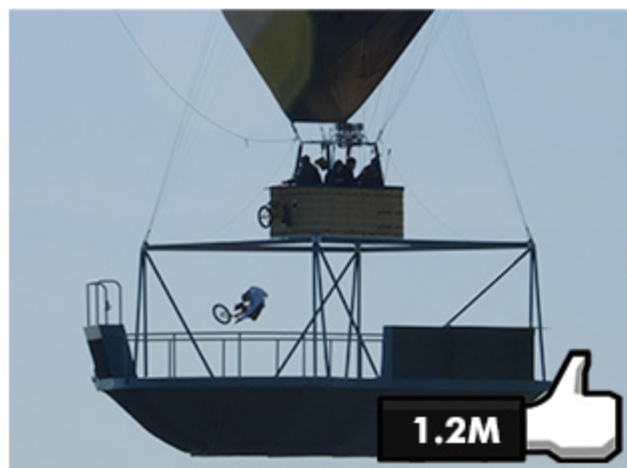
These are the 4 most popular videos that have been viewed on the site as voted for by you with your thumbs up likes in the last 2 months! Check out the full list [HERE](#), and if you see a video you like on the site, give it the thumbs up, it might just help to push it onto this page!

MOVIE NIGHT

#1

DON'T LOOK DOWN

Kriss Kyle dreamed up this project, but little did he know the level of aeronautical engineering that would be required to turn his fantasy into a reality. Watch as he rides a carbon fibre bowl at 2000ft!



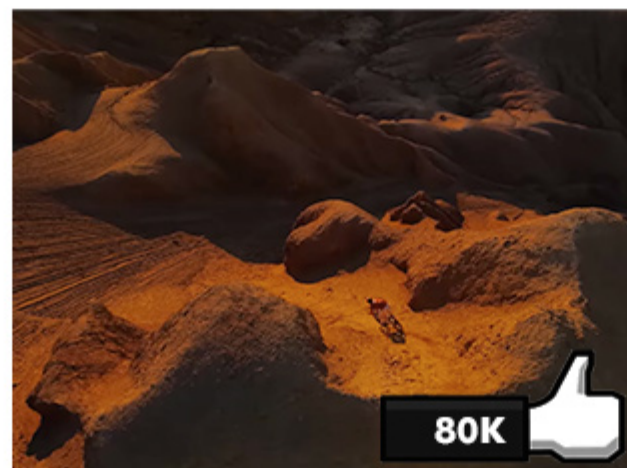
1.2M


[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2

CROSS COUNTRIES

Kilian Bron goes on another tour, this time to some of the most beautiful North American trails. From the roots of mountain biking in California to the dense Canadian forests, the best spots are all on show.



80K

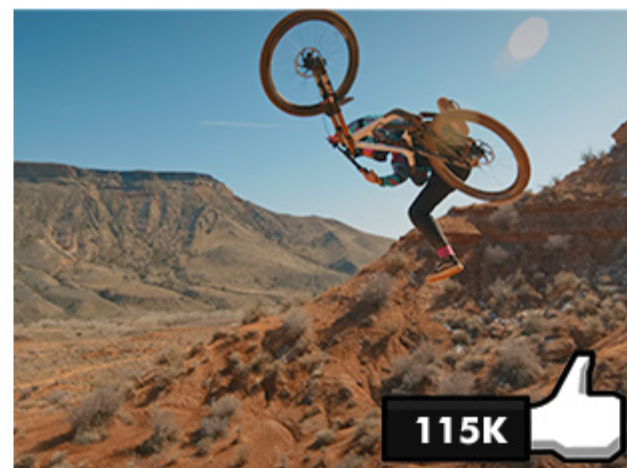

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#3

KAOS THEORY

The 'Butterfly Effect' – also referred to as Chaos Theory – supports the idea that a butterfly's wings could set systems in motion that eventually lead to a tornado somewhere else.

Kaos Seagrave's riding style is equally unpredictable, you never know what he's gonna do next.



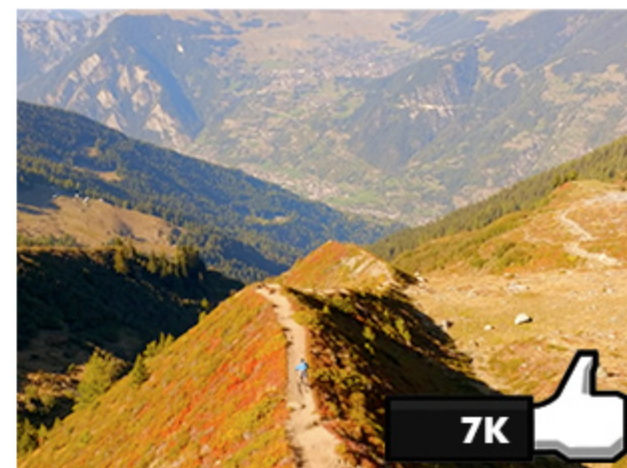
115K


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#4

FOUR SEASONS

Enjoy this work of art created by Nico Falquet and Ludo May, as he rides through all of the seasons on his home turf, Verbier Switzerland. And what better tune to pair with this cinematographic masterpiece than Vivaldi and a good pizza?



7K


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A silhouette of a mountain biker is captured mid-air, performing a jump over a dark, silhouetted cliff. The background is a vibrant sunset sky with streaks of orange and red clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong backlight effect.

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