



CHROMAG SAMURAI

\$1,240 (frame only)

CHROMAGBIKES.COM / 604-905-6667



IN A LAND RIFE WITH FULL-SQUISH MACHINES, BIG TIRES AND 8-INCH ROTORS COMES CHROMAG—a small manufacturer in Whistler, British Columbia, that has carved a niche by pumping out hand-built steel hardtails and high-quality components.

Chromag's trail bikes all share the same geometry, but use varying tube thicknesses and fork sizes to determine each model's affinity for gnar. The Samurai sits as the second-burliest model in Chromag's line. With a 150-millimeter-travel RockShox Revelation, the headtube angle sits at just under 68 degrees, and the bottom bracket is 12.3 inches high. The frame weighs a reasonable 5.6 pounds. The rear triangle features a machined yoke that is welded to the chainstays behind the bottom bracket to add stiffness. Tire clearance is impressive.

The Samurai's frame carved through corners like a katana through a rotten pumpkin. The Revelation's 20-millimeter though-axle helped keep the front of the bike tracking true, while the stiff frame delivered great power transfer that I appreciated on punchy climbs.

Descending the Chromag was done best with even doses of finesse and authority. The bike was snappy and nimble. Even though this is an aggressive hardtail, its rear end is still rigid—a fact I was reminded of whenever the trail led through steep, chunky rock gardens. In less-extreme descending conditions, however, the Samurai blasted through moderately rough, fast trails with confidence. The 16.5-inch-long chainstays made it easy to manual through dips or pop over rock gardens, but also added stability in steep or high-speed terrain. When lofted, the Samurai was predictable and whipable.

A low-slung toptube further added to the bike's aptitude for technical trails. The greater standover clearance made leaning the Samurai through corners or navigating tricky, slow-speed sections painless.

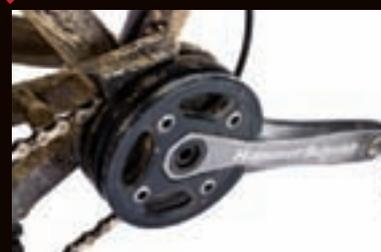
Climbing was best done with the fork's travel adjust slammed down. This cured the bike's tendency to wander, and gave the Samurai a steeper, more comfortable seat angle. Handling was so responsive that this could also be ridden as an all-day marathon machine. —RYAN LABAR

Chromag Seat QR



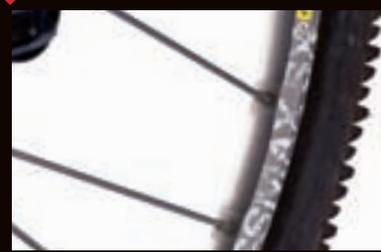
Chromag's Seat QR uses a large piece of brass under the cam to help reduce friction—no shredding weird shims or washers here. It was smooth, secure and noise-free. You can't ask for much more from a quick release.

Truvativ HammerSchmidt



The HammerSchmidt was ideal while riding in Whistler and Pemberton, where I tested this bike—it kept the clearance high through rock gardens and over logs. There was noticeable drag when riding in the harder gear.

Mavic Crossmax SX



Mavic's Crossmax SX wheels were stiff, smooth and solid, without any freehub issues. At 1,755 grams per set, they're also respectably light. The only downside is their non-traditional spokes, for which replacements can be difficult to find.

BOTTOM LINE: A BEAUTIFUL STEEL FRAME THAT SHREDS SINGLETRACK AND SHOULD LAST A LIFETIME.