

# First ride review: Open WI.DE. gravel bike

Open has continued to push the boundaries of road bike design, and the Wi.DE truly breaks the rules, and has fun doing it



The Open WI.DE. is yet another step in [Cervelo co-founder Gerard Vroomen](#)'s campaign to redefine the road bike, and there's no doubt that his latest iteration pushes the boundaries between genres further than ever before.

There's a huge amount to discuss about Open's frames, and our [review of the Open UP](#) explains much of the premise. Crucially, Vroomen set out to design a bike that handled the same whether it was mounted with a 28mm road tyre on a 700c wheel or a 2.1" mountain bike tyre on a smaller diameter 650B wheel.

Versatility was the key aim, and it clearly worked. The iconic dropped chainstay design was highly successful, and has found its way to numerous competitors. For this bike, Vroomen wanted to make the next step, and did so with the 'monostay'.

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The monostay is a one-piece extension below the bottom bracket that forms into the lowered chainstays. The benefit is increased stiffness and startlingly wide clearance. The WI.DE. comfortably accepts up to 2.4" tyres on a 650b rim.

That is a wide tyre indeed. To put it in context, a few years ago it would have been unorthodox to see XC mountain bike tyres this wide. While on 700c wheels, the tyres can be as wide as 46mm.

## **Geometry and fork**

Aside from the increased tyre clearance, the WI.DE. has a slightly more relaxed geometry, but Vroomen assures us that the ride is essentially the same. 'The final geometry really handles very similarly with a 2.25" tyre to

how the UPPER does with a 2.1" tyre,' says Vroomen.

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The WI.DE. also uses Open's U-turn fork, equipped with what the brand calls a SmartMount disc caliper mount. The aim is to do away with brake caliper adapters and instead set the mount in place for a 160mm rotor – reducing adjustment and making for a far cleaner aesthetic.

With a bike diverting so much from the norm as this, the real question is really what it is aiming to do, and what advantages it conceivably brings. For that we took to the road for a 90 minute ride in the mountains of Sun Valley, Idaho.

## **Off the track**

For my ability, I found myself riding happily at 25kmh on the road. Of course the tyres do bring weight with them, and a little more drag, but a wider tyre at lower pressure does often have a supple and responsive feel to it.

That's certainly the case with Schwalbe G-One tyres on the Open WI.DE. which felt fast and even slightly roadie on account of the smoother tread. That said, I was a little puzzled at the lack of knobs for off-road, but I decided to reserve judgement for the trail.

On the road, the WI.DE. largely felt like a normal road bike aside from the tyres. Open has always made its frames impressively stiff, using its patented (albeit tongue in cheek) TRCinTRS™ technology – meaning The Right Carbon in The Right Spot. There's truth behind the pun, though, and I recall riding the Open UP a few years ago on a set of 28mm tyres really shows how rigid the frame is in terms of power transfer.

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The result is a bike that moves decisively on all impulse and inputs. It feels like a road bike deep down. That said, the combination of the wide tyres, shallow headtube angle and short stem did seem to create some slightly floppy handling at low speeds.

The bike tended to dive into hard corners when travelling slowly. I wondered whether that was an issue of the enormous tyre wall lacking

the stiffness to corner, or something more central to the tweaks in the bike's geometry.

Vroomen suggests that given the small geometry tweaks the handling should be much the same as the UP, save for a slight slowing of handling response at very low speeds.

At any rate, once the speed came up the handling was intuitive and sharp – indeed it seemed increasingly in its natural state when above 25kmh. Off-road, though, it all came together very well.

## **Back on track**

Idaho is a huge hub for gravel riding, and we took a short trail into the mountains aboard the WI.DE. Having been riding gravel bikes all week, it was immediately evident how much more confident the bike was on the challenging terrain.

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That's partly down to the wider 2.4" tyres, but the geometry also seemed

to play a part. The front end was lively, darting around rocks and through cracks but never in a way that disturbed the stability of the bike, while on the whole it managed to offer enough agility for handling through technical fire-road descents.

The striking element of the WI.DE. though, was how much it still felt like a road bike. It is uniquely light amongst gravel bikes, with a frame weight of only 1,040g, which made ultra-steep inclines comparatively breezy.

The other side of that is that it makes trails and challenging terrain harder than on a mountain bike, and in a way more fun. I found myself hugely excited on a trail that would prove mildly boring on a full-suspension mountain bike. At the same time it was doable, where on a gravel bike with 32mm tyres I have a feeling I would have been walking.

In all honesty when I first saw the press release for the new Open WI.DE. I thought it had crossed a line into something too vague, and that it represented the peak of the wide-tyre trend. Having ridden it, though, all I can take away was how much fun I had.

Throughout the ride, I was doing all I could to navigate the clearest route through loose rock and gravel, while at the same time having a little confidence that the tyres would swallow up a mistake here or there.



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On flatter and clearer segments I was able to really tuck in and churn out a decent speed as if in the middle of a long road ride. Certainly for those racing on gravel, or who just enjoy riding fast, the WI.DE. is happiest when going quickly.

On descents, I was pushing up against the limits of my ability and confidence, and I could easily see customers opting for a dropper posts to try to eke a little more stability and speed out of a steep downhill.

Of course, some may ask whether someone who needs to limit themselves to one bike (possibly on account of city-living) will have access to trails that would warrant this tyre width. A separate road and mountain bike would possibly serve both areas better.

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*The WI.DE. has multiple mounts for endurance riding and bikepacking*

However, Open hasn't lost anything in the ride quality from expanding the tyre clearance, and at the same time it offers a unique riding experience on the right type of trail.

Equally, with multiple mount points for bottles, bikepacking gear and 'anything bags', it will definitely prove a weapon of choice for the likes of the Dirty Reiver and other endurance gravel events.

Ultimately, there's no denying that Open has absolutely nailed the aesthetics, as despite the WI.DE.'s confused orientation it looks every bit the slick and fast road bike.

The WI.DE. will need a little more riding in a wider variety of terrains to truly determine a verdict, but on first impressions it's managed the impressive feat of stepping on from what Open offered with the UP and UPPER.