



# Moots Routt 45 Review

## Capable gravel bike with magical titanium ride and mega tire clearance

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By Nick Legan February 26, 2019 GRAVEL

*Great looks and exceptional ride quality are complimented by massive tire clearance on the Moots Routt 45. Photo: Nick Legan*

### What Is It

While capable even in chunky conditions, the [Moots Routt 45](#) reminds you not to underestimate the road capabilities of a good titanium gravel bike.

### Pros

- Titanium, done right, is a perfect material for a gravel bike
- Anodized accents really tie “the room” together
- Excellent tire clearance without sacrificing handling

### Cons

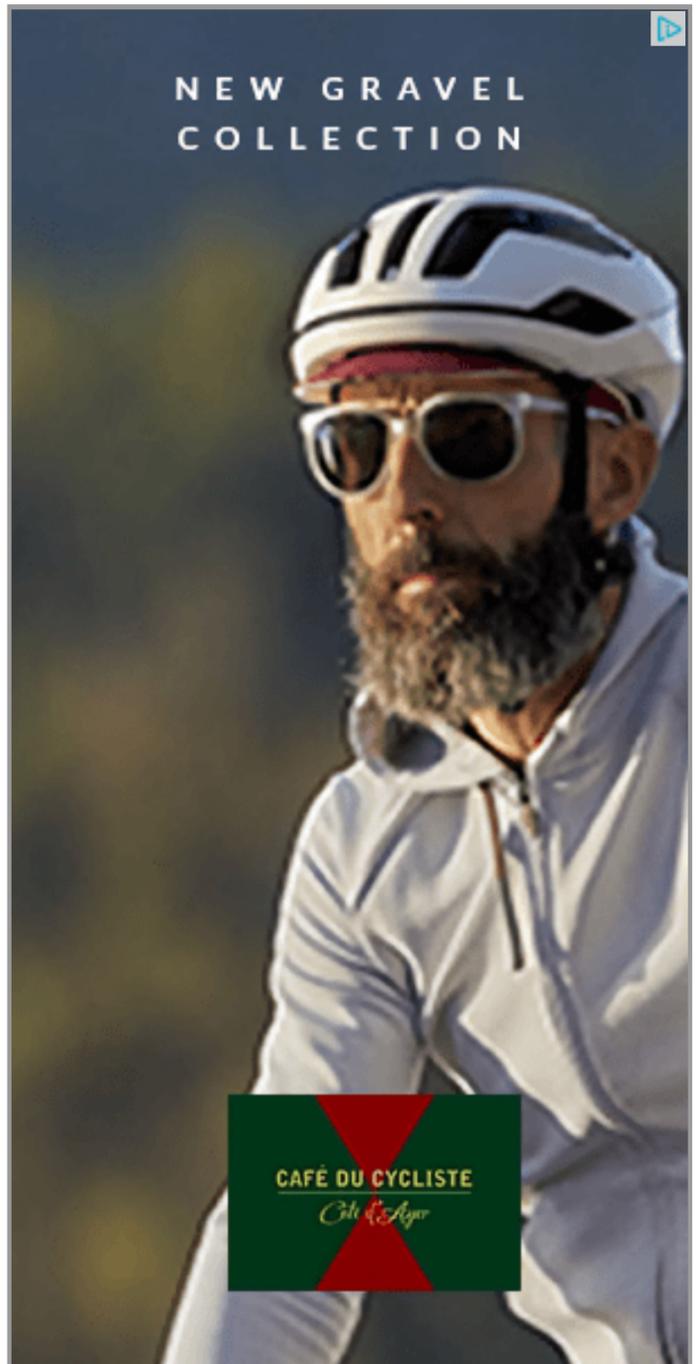
- You pay for the privilege
- If bikepacking is the goal, get a frameset

### RoadBikeReview’s Take

The allure of a titanium bike is well founded. The clean, matte grey look doesn’t distract or attempt to dazzle. It simply states that here sits a nice bike, one that was chosen over a carbon, steel or aluminum option, and one that can deliver a special ride that is comfortable yet lively.

*Pictured is the 3D-printed flat mount part. Designed at Moots and produced in Oregon, it looks great and reduces the number of welds required in the dropout area. Photo: Nick Legan*

It’s my job to assign words to a feeling when describing a bike but there is a certain je ne sais quoi quality to a titanium bike. I also get the same feeling with many steel bikes. They have the ability to take the buzz out of the road while still giving you a buzz. Instead of feeling like you’re isolated from the road, you feel connected to it. It’s as if a good titanium frame is alive, with its life mission to harmonize with its rider. And as icing on the cake, that ride quality arrives alongside a corrosion-resistant finish that is up to the rigors of decades of duty in harsh conditions. These are the makings of a



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perfect gravel bike.

When it comes to titanium done right, it's hard to fault Moots. While the Colorado-based brand started in steel, it has made its name using the non-ferrous alloy. For many, Moots is the first brand that comes to mind when titanium is mentioned. The Routt and the Routt 45 are the company's gravel bikes, both named for the county where Moots' Steamboat Springs HQ resides. While the Routt clears a 38mm tire, the 45 has room for, you guessed it, a 45mm tire. Pretty straightforward, right?

*The WTB Riddler 45 is one of the few tires offered in this size. It's a great, fast-rolling tire. But beware in jagged terrain, as it lacks the protection of other brands. Photo: Nick Legan*

Well, sort of. Getting that extra clearance involves a set of longer chainstays. But as a running change, Moots was recently able to shorten the stays on the Routt 45 from 450mm to 437mm. That may not seem like much, but it gets them quite a bit closer to the standard Routt's 423mm length. For fans of a predictable bike with great straightline stability, that is also eager to turn into a corner, the Routt 45 delivers. Despite its wider tires and slightly longer stays, it still feels more endurance road bike than mountain bike.

When it comes to frame stiffness, I'll admit that I don't look for an overbuilt bike. I'm not a powerhouse rider cranking out 2000-watt sprints. But few of us are — and even fewer are doing that on a gravel or dirt road. For me, the Routt 45 strikes a good balance between bump absorption and efficient transmission of pedaling input. To get a sense of the frame without the voluminous tires, I put on a set of road tires at road pressures and the Routt 45 still felt lively, comfortable, and efficient. It is a bike that can serve double duty as a road and gravel bike with a change of wheels or tires. And that's a good thing, because the Routt 45 is anything but cheap.

*The Moots carbon fork easily cleared a 45mm tire and never shuddered under heavy braking. Photo: Nick Legan*

## Options

The 55cm sample that I rode for this RoadBikeReview test retails for a whopping \$8145. Five hundred dollars of that is for the Stanley finish (more on that in a bit). The frameset, which uses straight-gauge, US-made 3/2.5 titanium, with a Moots carbon fork and Chris King headset is \$4799. But this is a premium bicycle and it has some details worth mentioning.

On the Moots Routt 45, and all of Moots' flat mount disc frames, a 3D-printed titanium piece to mount the rear brake is used. It was designed in-house but it made by a supplier in Oregon. It's a cool use of technology that avoids extra welding and results in a cleaner look.

*The multi-color, anodized finish is stunning. Photo: Nick Legan*

A prospective Moots buyer also has the option to add internal brake routing (\$300), S&S couplers (\$1200), a PF30 BB (\$350), and other nibs and nubs. If a stock size won't work for you, Moots will work with you to develop a custom geometry.

There's also a wide range of finish options with everything from decals to etched logos, panels to a series of gorgeous, signature finishes. The Routt 45 reviewed here is adorned with the Stanley multicolor anodized finish with a chainstay graphic that is based on the carpet of the namesake Estes Park hotel. Logos on the matching titanium stem and seatpost tie the ensemble together. But looks this good cost a



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pretty penny.

*The WTB Riddler 45 is one of the few tires offered in this size. It's a great, fast-rolling tire. But beware is jagged terrain, as it lacks the protection of other brands. Photo: Nick Legan*

Our test rig was assembled using Moots' new Factory Select build program. This option includes an etched finish, normally a \$500 upgrade. So the difference for the Stanley finish when purchasing a Moots through the Factory Select program is \$500. Buying a frame? It'll run you \$1000 extra. If you're a current Moots owner, you also have the option of sending your frame in for the treatment.

The Moots fork is also noteworthy. It easily cleared the WTB Riddler 45 tire that came on our test sample. It's a nice looking fork, too, with attractive lines and fender mounts that blend in when not in use. Under hard braking the tapered carbon fork never shuddered, and it handled nicely when pushed.

## The Build

The parts on the Moots Routt 45 are up to the customer with several complete builds available. Likewise, as mentioned above, framesets can be purchased and built up to taste. The Shimano Ultegra R8020 series group is a reliable, performance-oriented choice. The mechanical shifting is light and crisp, and the braking is what we've come to expect from all the major players: reliable, strong, and with good modulation. But the groupset was designed for road bikes and, in a way, it limits the Routt 45 despite its 1:1 low gear ratio (34T ring and 34T cassette).

*There are many sightings of the Mr. Moots alligator on the Routt 45 including this subtle one on the fork. Photo: Nick Legan*

The XL tires on the Routt 45 encourage taking on more difficult terrain including singletrack. Lower gears would make this a bit more doable for the average rider (of course, so too would a mountain bike. I get it. We're starting to split hairs...). The other upside to lower gearing would be in the Routt 45's role as a touring or bikepacking bike. Add even a super light load to a gravel bike, especially in the mountains on dirt roads, and anyone will appreciate a lower gear. But that's exactly why the Routt 45 is offered as a frameset.

The Mavic Ksyrium Allroad Elite wheels impressed with quick engagement, easy tubeless setup, and strong, reliable construction. They came shod with WTB's excellent, if a bit fragile, Riddler 45mm tires. Together, they are a great combination for the Routt 45. The Riddler is one of the few tires offered in a 45mm width, but it has a supple construction and a fast-rolling center section. If a Routt 45 owner was looking to get rowdier, there is Panaracer's Fire Cross 45mm, which has a chunkier tread pattern. The Bruce Gordon Rock 'n Road 43mm is another good option for the Moots.

*The Moots Routt 45 uses external routing of the shift cables and hydraulic line for mechanical build groups. Electronic builds receive internal brake routing, but it can also be added to a mechanical build. Same goes for a third bottle mount. Photo: Nick Legan*

It's also worth noting that the Moots Routt 45 isn't built with 650b wheels in mind. Instead they prefer to see it used with 700c wheels with tires ranging from 28-45mm. Of course, I had to give it a go. With a pair of ENVE G27 wheels and Panaracer Gravel King SK 650bx48mm tires, the Routt 45 still worked well in a wide variety of conditions. But I must admit that I preferred it with 700c wheels, as the Routt 45 felt



more like a super capable road bike in that guise.

Our Moots Routt 45 also featured fender mounts and a third bottle cage mount on the underside of the down tube. This is only an educated guess but I'm betting you could fit a set of fenders on top of 38-40mm tires. That would make for a pretty great all-weather commuter, touring, or adventure bike.

*The head tube badge on the Moots is a lovely cast piece featuring the famous Mr. Moots alligator. Photo: Nick Legan*

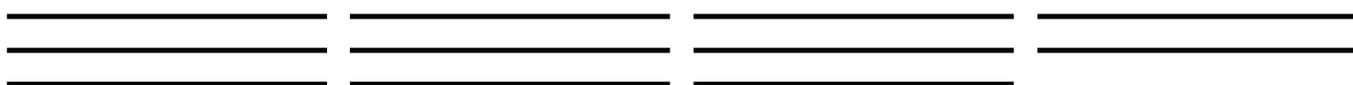
## Is the Moots Routt Right for You?

If you're looking for the ride that only titanium can deliver, if you love anodized finishes, if you want a bike than can serve as both your gravel and road bike, if you want to try your hand at bikepacking, the Moots Routt 45 is one helluva an option. The tire clearance is great especially if you live in an area where mud is common, or if you want to run high volume gravel tires and fenders. With a slightly different parts spec the Routt 45 makes a great bikepacking bike for extended trips on dirt and paved roads. It isn't a dart-like road bike, but it does ride really well in road trim. Perhaps most importantly, with its comfortable, efficient ride quality, built-in versatility, good looks, and durable finish, the Moots Routt 45 can be a forever bike. In that case, the price becomes a slightly smaller pill to swallow.

**Rating:** 4.5 out of 5

**Price:** \$8145 (including the \$500 Stanley finish)

**More Info:** [moots.com](http://moots.com)



### About the author: Nick Legan

Nick Legan is happiest with some grease under his nails and a long dirt climb ahead. As a former WorldTour team mechanic, Legan plied his trade at all the Grand Tours, Spring Classics, World Championships and even the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In recent years, gravel and ultra-distance racing has a firm grip on Legan's attention, but his love of mountain biking and long road rides hasn't diminished. Originally a Hoosier, Legan settled in Boulder, Colorado, 14 years ago after finishing his time at Indiana University studying French and journalism. He served as the technical editor at VeloNews for two years and now contributes to Adventure Cyclist, Mtbr and RoadBikeReview. To follow along on Legan's cycling adventures, find him on [Instagram](#) at @nlegan and be sure to check out his new book [Gravel Cycling: The Complete Guide to Gravel Racing and Adventure Bikepacking](#).

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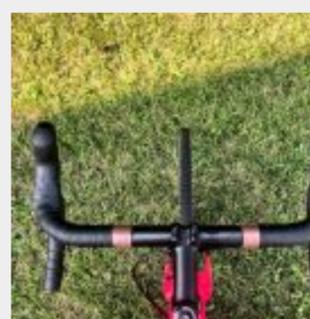
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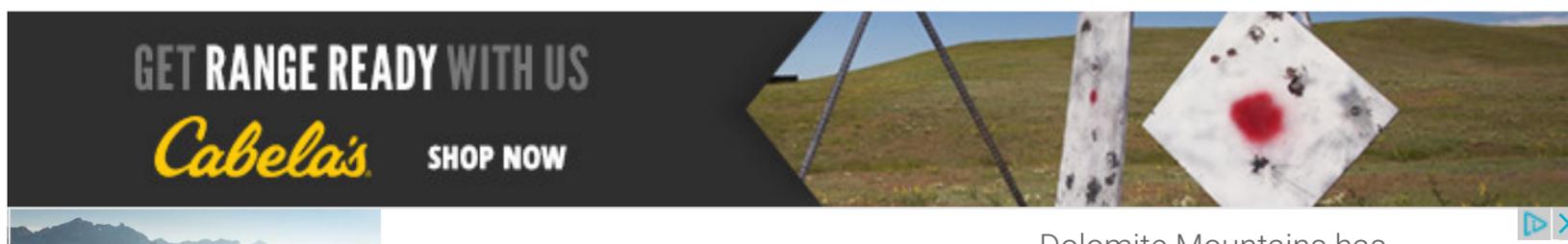
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