

[Bikes & Gear](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Bike Features](#) | [Workshops](#) | [Buyers Guides](#)

- Gear Browser**
- Bikes** (12819)
    - Road (4878)
    - Mountain** (5626)
    - Time Trial / Triathlon (208)
    - Hybrid (520)
    - Urban (566)
    - Kids (308)
    - Touring (89)
    - Folding (100)
    - Cyclo-cross (259)
    - Track (34)
    - Tandem (47)
    - Trials (6)
    - BMX (104)
    - Recumbent (4)
    - Load-Carrying (6)
    - Chopper / Cruiser (45)
    - Electric (20)
  - Components** (5726)
    - Frames (404)
    - Clothing (3464)
    - Accessories (2167)
    - Protection (474)
    - Tools (842)
    - Nutrition (74)
    - Books and DVD (72)

**Santa Cruz Superlight D review** | [Change Currency](#) \$ USD | [What's this?](#)

**BikeRadar verdict**

★★★★☆

**"Struggles to compete for value on paper, but it's a rare blend of sensible and fun on the trail"**



**Specification**

**Name:** Superlight D XC (11)  
**Built by:** Santa Cruz  
**Price:** n/a

[show full Specification](#)

**Shopping partners**

-  [Buy similar](#)
-  [Buy similar](#)
-  [Buy similar](#)
-  [Buy similar](#)
-  [Buy similar](#)

[Bikeradar Review](#) | [Manufacturers description](#) | [User reviews](#)  
 By Mike Davis, Mountain Biking UK | Thu 17 Mar 2011, 8:00 am UTC

Santa Cruz's Superlight has been around for a very long time. The current incarnation is four years old, and before that there's another 10 years of history to wade back through if you fancy it. Over that time much has changed, but the basic layout and profile of the Superlight is essentially the same.

So, can this venerable design still cut it in 2011? Yes. The Superlight is a true classic and, while its plain tubes are starting to look distinctly retro these days, it still delivers a great ride, even if you don't get anything like the level of spec that the bigger brands can offer.

**Ride & handling: Fun, lively bike that'll take on more than its travel would suggest**


We've always had a soft spot for Superlights. There aren't many simple single-pivots like this around any more, but there's a lot to like about the setup. Unsubtle rear braking can make things slightly chattery and the pedals kick a bit going up stepped climbs in the granny ring, but other than that it's a surprisingly vice-free arrangement.

The long-stroke shock – 50mm for 100mm travel at the wheel – helps a lot in the rough, making the Superlight remarkably composed. Having a long (120mm-travel) fork up front helps too, lending the bike a relaxed stance without blunting the handling too much. The Santa Cruz can start to feel a little on the lazy side if you're that way inclined, but the sensibly proportioned bar and stem encourage you to work the front end and keep things lively.

With more travel at the front it makes sense to ride in a slightly hardtail manner, making the most of the fork and letting the back end follow through. It may be a relatively unsophisticated and slightly portly unit, but the steel-stanchioned RockShox Recon is stiff, smooth and competent. The Maxxis Crossmark tyres wouldn't be our first choice for softer or wetter ground, and a little more volume would be useful on hard, rocky trails, but they roll fast and work fine on dry-to-tacky surfaces.

It's testament to the Superlight that its qualities remain largely undimmed by the relatively lowly spec. It's a fun, lively, involving bike that'll take on more than its travel would suggest. It's worth a look at the options list too – there are various builds and upgrades available if you're prepared to stretch the budget.

**Related articles**


[Cannondale RZ One Twenty 2 review](#)  
 Confident trail shredder

**Related links**

[Santa Cruz](#)  
 BikeRadar is not responsible for the content of external websites

**Also on BikeRadar**

[Racing](#)



#### Frame: Bombproof single-pivot set-up with generous mud room

Next to the current crop of full-suspension frames, the Superlight looks almost spidery. There's little in the way of weirdly shaped tubes, the twisty bits at the front of the swingarm being the only exception. Most notably, the head tube is a straight pipe with a conventional external headset for a straight 1.125in steerer.

Semi-integrated and tapered front ends haven't been around all that long, but they've been extensively adopted, making the Superlight's traditional front end the exception. You don't get to enjoy the undeniable fork and frame stiffness benefits of the contemporary front end, but the traditional design works as well as it ever did, and it's lighter.

At the back, the practical benefits of the single-pivot design are clear. There's very little to go wrong back there, with plenty of tyre clearance and no 'shelves' to collect dirt. At around 5.5lb (2.5kg) for the frame and shock, the Superlight is true to its name, making this a chassis worth hanging onto and upgrading as time goes on.



#### Equipment: Outgunned for component spec by the bigger manufacturers

Even the most cursory of glances will show that Santa Cruz don't quite have the buying power of some brands. The Superlight's spec is some way off the level of bikes at this price from bigger manufacturers. Despite that, the overall bike weight is competitive, with plenty of scope to go lower over time.

Sensibly, Santa Cruz have gone for solid, reliable gear throughout rather than trying to blindside buyers with one or two over-the-top blingy bits. The obvious setup for a 100mm-travel frame is a 100mm-travel travel fork, and that's certainly an option on the Superlight. It's steep and low in that configuration, meaning that there's scope for going longer – Santa Cruz rate it for 100- to 120mm-travel units.

Our test bike had a 120mm RockShox Recon Silver R up front, which looks rather low-rent next to the array of Foxes elsewhere at this price, but isn't actually at all bad. Chromed silver stanchions add weight, but they're also stiff and the shiny finish helps keep the action smooth.

Elsewhere you're looking at a Shimano Deore/SLX transmission mix – just the nine speeds out back, but we don't have a problem with that – and Avid Juicy 3 brakes that are competent if uninspiring. The same is true of the finishing kit, which is from Race Face's Ride line. It's not the most exciting stuff, but it does the job just fine.



#### UCI release list of approved frames, forks and wheels

Five framesets now comply with...

#### Fitness



#### Nutrition: Do cycling and vegetarianism mix?

How a meat-free diet could...

#### News



#### Specialized McLaren Venge aero road bike launched

Collaboration with Formula One...

#### News



#### Video: Chris Akrigg's 'A Hill in Spain'

All-mountain/trials mashup in...

#### News



#### Cycling products win iF design awards

Gold for Canyon Aeroad CF and...

#### Magazines



#### Rapha riding to raise funds for Japanese earthquake victims

Top cycling clothing brand...

What's the score with BikeRadar reviews? You can find a full explanation of our ratings here.

Do you like this? [Share](#) [Buzz](#) [Tweet](#) [Like](#) 10

You need to login or [register](#) to post comments.

Username

Password

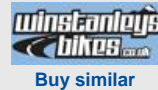
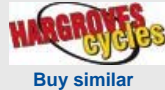
Please confirm you are a person by entering the words in the box below:



Thumbs Up: Bad 1 2 3 4 5 Good not applicable

Review/Comment

### Shopping partners



You Are Here: [Home](#) ▶ [Gear](#) ▶ [Santa Cruz Superlight D XC \(11\)](#)

[Home](#) [Road](#) [Mountain Biking](#) [Commuting](#) [Beginners & Family](#)

#### News

- [Road News](#)
- [Mountain Biking News](#)
- [Commuting News](#)
- [Beginners & Family News](#)
- [BikeRadar Blog](#)

#### Magazines

- [Cycling Plus](#)
- [ProCycling](#)
- [Mountain Biking UK](#)
- [What Mountain Bike](#)

#### Gear and Reviews

- [Road Bikes](#)
- [Mountain Bikes](#)
- [Time Trial / Triathlon Bikes](#)
- [Hybrid Bikes](#)
- [Urban Bikes](#)
- [Kids' Bikes](#)

#### Races

- [Tour de France](#)

#### Workshops & Buyers Guides

- [Workshop: How to clean and lube your bike](#)
- [Workshop: Emergency bike repairs](#)
- [Workshop: Mechanics' Tips](#)
- [Buyers guide to: Commuting in the dark](#)
- [Buyers guide to: UK tax free bike schemes](#)
- [Buyers guide to: Kids' Bikes](#)

#### BikeRadar

- [Terms and Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [About us](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Jobs](#)



Copyright 2006 - 2009 Future Publishing Limited,  
Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, UK BA1 2BW  
England and Wales company registration number 2008885

