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AND THE WINNER IS... RAGLEY TRIG

A winning experience from the British brand

Gravel bikes come in many shapes and forms. If you want a road bike with off-road potential, then Felt's Breed fits the bill. It's road-bike light and superbly equipped for the money, with a premium drivetrain, carbon seatpost, top-brand saddle and superb tyres. Plus it has on-road manners to rival the landed gentry on *Downton Abbey*. But if you want a bike that excels when the going gets rough and tough, then the BiviBIKE Graveler, Vitus Substance SRS 1 and Ragley Trig are much more technical and trail-minded.

The BiviBIKE is so surefooted on off-road tricky technical descents that it's intoxicatingly good and its charms are plentiful. I admire the idea of a simple one-size-fits-all mantra but 55cm sizing favours the taller end of the range: a shorter riding buddy found it overly long.

Vitus's Substance is typically brilliant value from the Northern Ireland/French brand. Its off-road-biased geometry and fat-tyre-equipped 650b wheels make it more capable than most, and aside from a weirdly stiff uncomfortable saddle and noisy brakes it's hard to fault.

My winner, however, is Ragley's Trig. This is a bike that's uncompromisingly built for tough terrain, it has geometry that encourages bad behaviour and it won't put you in trouble when you follow suit. It's well-equipped and has a set of boots that are simply brilliant for year-round British conditions. Is it perfect? Well no, I'd upgrade the brake rotors sooner rather than later, however, the Trig made every ride better and heaps more fun. I was so smitten with just how well the Trig handled that I'm seriously considering getting a Trig frameset on order for a custom build.

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