

Salsa Vaya



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Tester Name: Andy Bruno

Age: 42

Height: 6'

Weight: 180lbs.

Inseam: 33"

Country of Origin: Taiwan

Price: \$1500

Weight: 27.0lbs.

**Sizes available: 50, 52, 54, 55, 56,
57, 58 (tested), and 60cm**

Contact: www.salsacycles.com

In the last few years, Salsa Cycles has been focusing on bikes built for adventure. Sure, all bikes are capable of adventures, but Salsa seems to have identified features and specifications for big “A” adventures—spanning multiple weeks, countries, and terrain. The Vaya is a recent addition to the Salsa lineup and includes lots of the meat and potatoes any good adventurer would ask for. It’s a bike that kicks up the wanderlust of the rider after the first few turns of the pedals.

Salsa calls the Vaya “a true do-it-all road-riding bike.” But Salsa’s loose interpretation of the word “road” may come as a welcome surprise to many of us. This is not your typical “road” or “touring” bike that is limited to mostly paved surfaces—it can handle forays off the beaten path, places that any third-world country may consider a “road.”

The backbone of the Vaya is the Salsa Classico chromoly steel frame and fork that provide a solid and dependable chassis for a sturdy drivetrain and component spec. Both frame and fork include 74mm disc brake post mounts for adapter-free caliper installation, and the rear disc brake is mounted on the chainstay for easy fender and rack mounting. Front and rear dropouts both have dual eyelets, one for a rack and one for fenders. The fork also has lowrider mounts for the full-on touring set-up.

The 135mm rear spacing will accept mountain bike hubs and wheels intended for abuse. The frame also has a sloping top tube, giving the rider a little extra standover clearance and making it easier to get on and off the bike while fully loaded. Some nice additional frame features are a pump peg and three bottle cage mounts, two in the front triangle and one under the down tube.

A good mix of Shimano LX and Tiagra make up the drivetrain with a double chainring, 9-speed cassette and STI shifters. The word from Salsa is that a triple chainring option will also be available in 2011. SRAM BB5 Road disc brakes offer dependable stopping power in both wet and dry conditions.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t also mention that the Vaya is a very nice-looking bike. Silver components highlight the rich, “Upside Brown” paint with light-blue Salsa logos. Brown bar tape and a Salsa-embroidered Velo saddle give the bike a classic, refined look.

On the road, the Vaya was a fun, comfortable, and surprisingly quick bike despite the stable “touring” geometry. The Vaya felt like a mix between a cyclocross and a touring bike. The semi-upright riding position was comfortable for long days in the saddle and provided a good center of balance when riding fully loaded. The stock double chainring and cassette offer a good range of gears for riding around with lighter loads, but go for the triple if you’re into serious touring.

Carrying a heavy load, the Vaya felt solid and the handling was predictable. The chromoly frame provided just enough flex to give a comfortable ride without being noodly. With a properly distributed load, the Vaya felt balanced and lets the rider enjoy the ride.

I’m a big fan of the Salsa Moto Ace Bell Lap drop handlebar, but the 46cm version was a bit too wide for me. This width, however, only comes stock on the two largest sizes of the Vaya (58 and 60cm). The stock Continental TourRIDE 700x1.6” tires give a nice high-volume, smooth ride and are great for exploring unimproved roads and gravel trails. They were good on smooth pavement as well, although I’d recommend swapping them out for something a little narrower if you’re sticking to the pavement.

During the time I had the Vaya, I installed both front and rear racks as well as fenders. With all the threaded rack and fender bosses included on the frameset, installation was straightforward and relatively easy.

The only issue I had with the bike was a bent derailleur hanger and a trashed rear derailleur after getting tangled up with a stick. This is hardly an issue specific to the Vaya as it could happen to any bike without a replaceable derailleur hanger. Luckily, the good old bendable steel frame allowed



us to straighten out the hanger. I bolted on a new derailleur and was back in business in no time. The word from Salsa is that the derailleur hanger will be replaceable in 2011.

Whether you’re commuting to work, going on a charity ride, taking a weekend excursion, or packing the bike for an extended tour, the Vaya is up for the challenge. The two smallest sizes of the eight available use 26” wheels, while the larger sizes use 700c. Tire clearance shouldn’t be a problem, with the 26” models fitting up to a 1.75” tire and the 700c’s fitting up to 42mm.

We tested a 2010 model, and basically the only changes coming in 2011 are different paint and graphics options, and more importantly, as mentioned earlier, a replaceable derailleur hanger. The 2011 Vaya will have the same rear dropout as the Salsa Fargo. The Vaya is available as a complete bike (\$1500) or frame and fork only (\$540). Salsa will also offer a U.S.A.-made, titanium Vaya frameset for \$2000. —Andy Bruno