

## The H Factor



Reasserting our Motoring proposition

### The H Factor — reasserting our proposition authority

Over the years Halfords had become the natural destination for Automotive, Cycling and Travel Solution products and services that we offer; however, more recently this authority in our range and products has waned as our proposition no longer inspired our customers and our service levels were inconsistent.

However, we have the building blocks to once again be the “place to shop” for our products and to give our customers the confidence that “what they want”, we stock. We already stock great cycling products; from kids’ bikes, family bikes, and commuter bikes right up to the premium *Boardman* and *Pinarello* bikes. We also carry a wide range of automotive after-market products from car cleaning to bulbs, blades and batteries through to our Halfords Autocentres garages providing a wide range of service, maintenance and repair expertise. Our camping brands, including *Gelert*, *CampingGaz*, *Outwell*, *Vango* and our own brand *Urban Escape*, provide families with the equipment to enjoy their leisure time.

We are driven by the need to bring passion and excitement back to our stores, we need to attract customers back to browse our stores, be excited by the innovative products on offer, by the solutions we can offer them in their busy lives and be awed by the level of specialism and associated knowledge and expertise of our colleagues.

**“By the end of the summer we will have rebalanced some 100 stores with a focus of moving child seats downstairs in stores, releasing space to cycling, better segmenting our Cycle offer and taking space away from car enhancement.”**

Consequently over the next few years we are going to restore and celebrate our specialism in our the three core pillars. We will continue *Supporting Drivers of Every Car* by increasing our coverage of the UK car parc, and looking to reduce delivery time to our stores for the product lines we don’t regularly carry. This will complement and supplement our 3Bs fitting offer where we have seen the number of jobs grow by c.32% in FY13 as more of our customers become aware of this cost-effective, hassle-free solution to their busy lives. We will continue to *Inspire Cyclists of Every Age* with our wide ranging cycle offer from our range of children’s bikes and matching accessories; such as the *Apollo Cupcake* bike, helmet & bell through to our premium brands of *Boardman* and the recently introduced *Pinarello*.

We will seek to mirror our success in our 3Bs fitting offer by committing resources in-store and developing our 3-Gears programme to build our cycle repair offer, delivering a significant revenue stream and increasing our authority as a comprehensive cycle shop. By the end of the summer we will have rebalanced some 100 stores with a focus of moving child seats downstairs in stores, releasing space to cycling, better segmenting our Cycle offer and taking space away from car enhancement. Our customers will be able to find what they want when they want it, engaging with knowledgeable colleagues who can build trust and confidence and revenues.

In providing trustworthy solutions to our customers, supporting their use of both the car and the bike, Halfords is already Equipping Families for their Leisure Time and as we continue to develop this area from camping products to caravan accessories, we will continue to look to excite both colleagues and customers through the introduction of new leisure products that build on Halfords’ authority in bikes and cars and drives revenue growth in this area.

All of this must recreate and enhance the H Factor: the confidence and trust with which customers can turn to Halfords as the natural destination for their automotive, cycling and leisure products.

### FY14 Operational Milestones

- Cycle Repair sales growth.
- Launch PACs.



**Bike Test**  
ENTER YOUR RATED PRICE  
**£430-£550**

**MOUNTAIN VINTS**  
Carrera's Mountain King 2.2m gives you great responsiveness and control

**100MM TRAVEL**  
But only 440-450g! That's a genuine 100mm of fork travel

**REINFORCED TUBE**  
The frame is very quiet and comfortable on the road

# CARRERA KRAKEN

**£450** Probably the best hand-hitting sub-£500 bike we've ever tested

- SO GOOD**  
The SR Suntour 100 fork offers a well-adjusted 100mm of travel
- NO DODD**  
The bike is so light and agile it's a real joy to ride
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**ADJUSTABLE**  
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**H**alfords have a habit of offending the opposition in terms of both components and ride value with their Carrera machines. The Kraken continues this trend. It has a better fork than any other bike in this price and it's among the few sub-£500 bikes to get 27 gears. With hydraulic braking and great wheels it's the lightest as well as one of the cheapest bikes here too. So is there a downside? Well, there certainly isn't one that relates to the ride, but some riders might flinch at the fact that this model has been available relatively unchanged since 2011 – Halfords don't live by the ultra-modern change thing of other manufacturers. Look out for the new Carrera range in late spring.

**The frame**  
Oh, the Kraken's frame is a bit less sleek and more workmanlike than most of the others on test here, but the tubes offer clearance and reinforcements where it matters, open-gated behind the handlebars, shaped head tube and bridge grafted from the low top tube across to the widened seat tube.

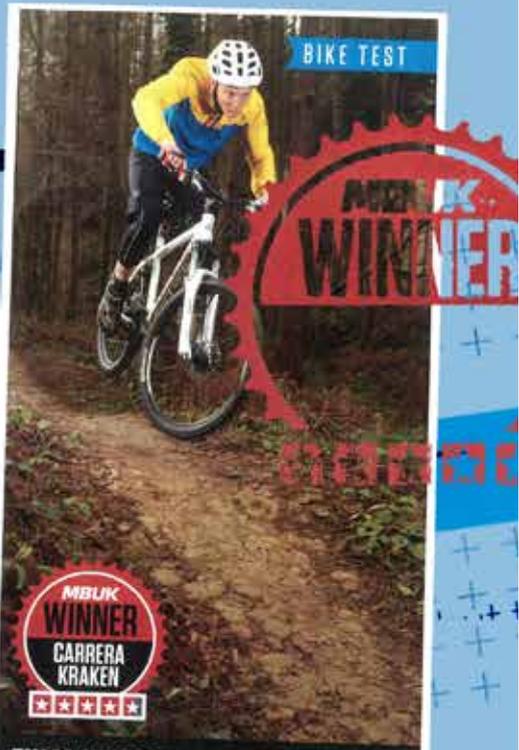
The Alloy seat clamp, bars, fenders, out of the rear wheel spring, there's lots of mud room and there are two sets of bottle holders plus rack mounts for riders looking at utility usage. But the Kraken deserves more than round town use. With its long reach fork, fat grippy tyres and aggressive ride posture it's one of the few bikes we've tested under £500 that can handle proper track, fast and technical trails.

The fork is just an SR Suntour model like most bikes around this price, but it's the XCR model with a hydraulic lockout and offers a plush adjustable 100mm (4.7in) of travel as well as a reasonably well controlled rebound. The rebound is still more lively than on forks with proper rebound damping but the rebound has a little top out rattle than the hard think of the XCM model.

The preload dial is effective in stiffening/loosening the spring, but the lockout is a bit clunky over rough surfaces when employed, we left it off.

**The detail**  
Most riders find SRAM's X2 drivetrain a bit more chunky than Shimano

**The ride**  
Most bikes at this price boast – but rarely deliver – 100mm (3.9in) of fork travel. The controlled compression and rebound of the Kraken's plush 100mm (4.7in) model combines with a compact frame, generous-crotch clearance and aggressively treaded tyres to create an amazingly well controlled ride on trails that are often best avoided on bikes under £500. The lock still shows its limits on rough drops, but it works with the



**MBUK WINNER**  
CARRERA KRAKEN  
★★★★★

## FINAL VERDICT

**A**s usual, the dominating characteristic of most bikes in this price category is fork performance. Everything else pales into relative insignificance. The only fork that allowed sub-£500 performance on properly rough trails was the SR Suntour XCR 100mm (4.7in) travel model on the Carrera Kraken. Most of the others, mainly SR Suntour XCMs, needed stripping and servicing after the first wet ride. There are still positive things to say about the other bikes. The £430 Diamondback Peak is great value for a bike with

hydraulic brakes. The Cube Aim 26 is a great-looking and well-equipped for a £500 bike and, like the Focus Whizzer and the Diamondback, worth investing more money on a fork as and when you can stretch to it. It's good to see more 29ers appearing around £500 too. Trek's Marlin and Merida's Big Nine TFS1000 both offer great frames that would be worthy of better forks and parts, and the fact remains that bigger wheels offer a smoother more stable ride while only carrying a little extra weight. Nothing came close to the ride appeal and value of the Carrera Kraken though.