

THE TWO THOUSAND MILE MIRACLE TIRE

What if I told you there is a miracle tire out there that sticks to loose soil, roots & rocks unlike any knobby you have ever owned? Would you be interested?

This miracle tire is the Michelin X11 4.00x18 from Trials bike competition. The Trials guys go up sheer vertical rock faces & do seemingly impossible things, partly because of these sticky tires. You can take advantage of them for trail riding on your dirt bike too.

I had heard about the benefits of these tires for a while, but was very hesitant to try one. It does not have the aggressive knobby pattern we are all used to. Instead there are far more blocks & less spacing, which is part of what makes the tire work so well.

The rubber is very soft & has a much larger contact patch of rubber. One would think that the soft rubber would disintegrate under the power of my KTM 450EXC, not so. After about 2000 miles of riding all the little knobblies, or tire blocks, are still there. It has been ridden on all types of trails & dirt roads, as well as on pavement at speeds up to forty miles an hour. Even once the little knobs fall off the tire still performs very well in dry conditions. Riders on KTM 525 & 380's also rave about the performance & durability. The key seems to be the ability of those soft tire blocks to deform & to spread the traction over more surface area than a knobby.

In order to use the tire on a normal dirt bike we found it necessary to install a super heavy duty tube (even thicker than heavy duty) & inflate to 11psi for normal trail riding with sharp rocks & roots. (Update 2007 the Michelin 18MFR thin tube works better than the super heavy tubes, probably because of superior rubber) The higher inflation pressure keeps the soft tire from pinch flattening. I have had no flats with 9-11 psi in 8000 miles of mostly tight technical riding at speeds up to 35 mph on the trails & up to 45 on paved roads for short distances. For longer distances on paved roads the tire should be inflated to 18 psi or more. Some people inflate the tire to a higher pressure to avoid pinch flats on the trail, but that will reduce the contact patch & the performance of the tire.

It hooks up so well that a second rim lock needed to be installed to keep the tire from spinning on the rim. A recent ride with a friend on a brand new soft Kenda knobby on his bike found the X11 with 2000 miles on my KTM to work as good or better & move less soil.

With the Michelin X11 you can actually stop on a loose steep trail & then go again, usually with minimal or no tire spin. In the same spot, even with a new knobby, you would probably dig a hole & go nowhere. While getting superior performance the Michelin tire moves very little dirt, which is important in these days of trail closures because of trail rutting. The bike easily goes over rock ledges with dirt below, most knobby tread riders would dig a hole below



Michelin X11 with about 2000 miles

On narrow sidehill trails with loose soil, the tire will rarely dislodge loose soil. I have even dipped off the trail slightly on a loose sidehill & kept riding back up on the trail. With a knobby the rear end would have slid down & I would have needed help to push the bike back up on the trail.

What about sand & mud? As far as I have been able to tell & talking to others that use the Michelin, it performs as well as a knobby, while being far superior to a knobby on rocks,

roots, loose soil & hard pack. With proper throttle control the X11 will not spin even on wet rocks & roots, unlike a knobby. This trials tire wants to go over all trail obstacles.

The tire is taller than most knobbies, so overall gearing may feel a bit higher than with a knobby. Even so, the X11 hooks up so well that you will probably be able to ride a gear higher than normal, at lower rpms, with better traction & fuel mileage. The clutch may feel a bit slower to engage, probably because of the increased traction. After using the X11 for about 1500 miles, I thought my clutch was going away, but pulled it apart & found all the plates to be fine. Clutch springs were replaced because of normal compression from over 3 years & 400 hours of use.

Most riders seem to get at least double the mileage out of the X11 as they do from a knobby, but the performance of the X11 deteriorates very slowly unlike a knobby.

The mileage you get out of the Michelin Trials tire will depend on how heavy handed you are with the throttle. Many riders have run the X-11 for over 2300 miles, however just like any tire they can be worn out much faster by excessive tire spin.

The best part is the Michelin gives you increased performance while being keeping the trails in better condition & saving you money. As many other X11 owners have stated, try one & you will be hooked.

IRC & Dunlop also make a Trials Tire. Both seem to wear out more quickly than the Michelin. The Dunlop has stiffer sidewalls for those of you who do more Dual sport than single track & do not require the ultimate traction of the Michelin but want a less squishy ride

Chris Horgan
Executive Director
Stewards of the Sequoia
Division of CTUC 501c3



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