



# HEART OF STEEL COTO DOÑANA TOUR

BY JILL JANOV

→ PURCHASING A CUSTOM Coto Doñana bicycle without planning your next adventure is akin to wearing an Oscar de la Renta gown and having nowhere special to go.

If you are even considering buying the Heart of Steel Coto Doñana, I suggest you start arranging your next journey because this bicycle is a hand-built beauty worthy of its own dream vacation.

So worthy, in fact, that the frame is named after a national park in southern Spain where I hear you can ride along a beautiful shoreline to a nudist beach.

Southern Spain would be spectacular on this bike, even fully clothed. But my personal cycling nirvana would involve riding the Coto Doñana from Washington to California along the brilliant Sierra Cascades Route marked by volcanoes, countryside, desert lands, and orchards.

Even more heavenly would be rolling through the magnificent Serrai di Sottoguda Gorge carved by glaciers toward the high peak of the outrageously steep Passo Fedaia in northern Italy's Dolomite Mountains.

A girl can dream, and this bicycle not only inspires the imagination, it has a gear ratio capable of ascending any mountain imaginable — even fully loaded.

Mechanical engineer Georgena Terry is the founder of Terry Precision Bicycles and an unambiguous

## SPECIFICATIONS

HEART OF STEEL  
COTO DOÑANA

Price: \$3,500

Sizes available: XS, S, M, L, XL

Size tested: M

Weight: 20.62 lbs

## TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

1. Seat tube: 47.7cm (to center)

2. Effective top tube: 51cm

3. Headtube angle: 71.5°

4. Chainstay length: 42cm

5. Bottom bracket drop: 5cm

6. Fork rake: 4.5cm

7. Wheelbase: 97.9cm

8. Stand-over height: 76.4cm

9. Frame and fork: Waterford 14 series OS2 alloy steel, tig-welded

10. Rims: Velocity Aerohead 32-hole 26-inch rim

11. Spokes: Double-buttet 2/1.8mm

12. Hubs: Velocity

13. Tires: Panasonic Panaracer T-Serv PT

14. Front Crankset: Shimano Deore XT 22-32-44

15. Crank length: 170mm

16. Front derailleur: Shimano Deore XT

17. Rear derailleur: Shimano Deore XT Shadow



- 18. Shift levers:** Shimano Dura Ace 9-speed bar-end
- 19. Brake levers:** Tektro RL341 small ergo lever
- 20. Cog cassette:** Shimano XT 11-13-15-17-20-23-26-30-34
- 21. Chain:** Shimano HG-73
- 22. Saddle:** Terry Butterfly
- 23. Seat post:** Thomson Elite
- 24. Brakes:** Avid Shorty 6
- 25. Pedals:** n/a
- 26. Bars and stem:** Typically Salsa Pro Road, but will vary depending on size of rider

**GEARING IN INCHES:**

	22	32	44
11	52	75.6	104
13	44	64	88
15	38.1	55.5	76.3
17	33.6	48.9	67.3
20	28.6	41.6	57.2
23	24.9	36.2	49.7
26	22	32	44
30	19.1	27.7	38.1
34	16.8	24.5	33.6

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doyenne of women’s bicycle design. In her new venture at Heart of Steel, she created the Coto Doñana Tour as a “true touring bike designed to take you and your gear anywhere.”

With a steel frame and fork hand-made by Waterford Cycles in Wisconsin and 26-inch Velocity wheels made in Michigan, the bicycle is not only sturdy, it’s an attention grabber.

The classic touring bike I tested was a 2010 model TIG-welded and painted in a deep-sea blue.

“Righteous!” said mechanic D.J. Casarez as I rolled into Albuquerque’s Kickstand bicycle shop. “That bike gets beauty marks.”

Capable of carrying an extremely heavy load, the stable diamond frame is a spinoff of a cyclocross bicycle that Terry built for a small rider on a team that she sponsored in 2007.

“It occurred to me that with some small tweaks the Coto Doñana Tour could be an incredibly versatile bike for a much broader audience,” she said.

The touring model is equipped with bottle-cage bosses to carry two water bottles and it features plenty of mounts for front and rear luggage. Braze-ons placed in standard positions can accommodate most racks, including the popular Tubus Tara Lowrider tubular front carrier. Single eyelets on the dropouts can be upgraded with a custom design for those who choose racks that require two eyelets.

The bike’s 26-inch wheels and cantilever brakes offer plenty of clearance for fenders and enough rim space for a variety of tires ranging from 1 inch to 1.5 inches wide.

The mountain bike wheels offer a particular advantage when, for example, you find yourself pedaling through sand on a Spanish nude beach or struggling to navigate a muddy road in Romania — although you might need a knobbier tire than the Panasonic Panaracer T-Serv PT tires I used on the road. But 26-inch wheels, in general,

are handy to have when shopping for tires in far-flung lands with nary a bicycle shop.

“Wider tires are in,” Terry said. “And comfort is the new stiff.”

Terry added that her customers prefer versatility. They want to ride on different road surfaces on a stable bike, and they tend to choose triple cranksets with “really low gears.”

The Heart of Steel Coto Doñana Tour that I tested had gears that were beyond adequate. With a triple 22-32-44 in front and an 11-34 in the rear, I easily spun up steep mountain roads near my home in central New Mexico as I conjured up images of myself traversing the switchbacks along classic Giro d’Italia stage routes.

I found the Waterford OS2 double-butted steel frame and fork ideal for serious touring with enough torsional rigidity in the frame and toptube stiffness to generate confidence that the bike wouldn’t shimmy or flex when loaded. In fact, it becomes even more comfortable to ride when packed.

The backpacking philosophy that you should carry only 25 percent of your body weight doesn’t apply to bicycle touring. And it clearly doesn’t apply to this steel frame. So feel free to roll your full-length, densely beaded Oscar de la Renta into a flowery Basil Bloom double pannier set in diva blue.

And with a heavy load, you won’t struggle to shift into an easy gear in a pinch. The bike is set up with bar-end indexed or friction shifters, making it effortless to throw the chain into the appropriate cog as you start uphill.

Bar-end shifters instead of integrat-

ed brake and shift levers are especially appreciated when your fully loaded bike tips over, which does happen with heavily packed panniers.

The Tektro Aero RL341 brake levers are designed with a shorter reach for women who typically have smaller hands. Many of us can speak from experience that it’s nice to be able to reach and squeeze your brakes when bringing a 20-pound rig loaded with 40 pounds of luggage to an immediate stop.

The Coto Doñana comes in two models — the sturdy Tour ready to load up and the CD Vagabond roadie packaged with higher gearing and integrated brake and shift levers.

Those who don’t load up when they tour can select the Vagabond, a less robust, lighter frameset with smaller-diameter tubing and higher gear inches. And if you don’t need fender clearance, I would suggest you spec yours with linear-pull brakes such as the Tektro RX5 or the higher-end TRP CX 8.4-9.0 that offer easier setup and significantly better stopping power and modulation.

The Tour is usually sold as a stock bike and offered in five sizes. Most women fit the stock frame sizes, but custom tweaks are offered for about \$250.

Terry celebrates the chance to interact directly with her customers. Recently she delivered a custom bike to a woman who ordered the Coto Doñana with a longer chainstay to accommodate greater heel clearance with her “gonzo panniers.”

“This customer plans on doing loaded touring on dirt roads so we used a slightly wider rim for wider tires built up on Phil Wood hubs,” she said.

“I work exclusively with women since that’s the rider I understand. The fun of my business is interacting with my customers. I feel as though I’ve not only enhanced someone’s enjoyment of cycling, I’ve also made a new friend,” she added.

The ordering process involves picking out a frame design, components, and color. It’s your dream bike so dress it up specifically for your upcoming adventure. Design your bike with smaller Salsa bars or flat bars with a higher setup, dual brake levers, a higher spoke count, a shorter top tube, V-brakes, more drop, less rake. It’s up to you.

Select your frame color from Heart of Steel’s color palette or request a specific shade or design. Once you place a \$1,500 deposit, your ride will materialize in eight to 12 weeks. Terry ships your bike to a local bike shop to build and fit for you. After you ride it for a couple of weeks, you either pay the balance or return the bike if you don’t like it.

“Don’t lose sleep,” Terry said. “In four and a half years, only one bike has been returned.”

So, go ahead and sleep — and dream because you have somewhere special to go. **AC**

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*Jill Janov has been working as a bicycle journalist since 1996 and road racing since 1986. She has written for general newspapers and cycling publications including Bicycle Retailer & Industry News, VeloNews, and Mountain Flyer and was a founding member and All-Star Rider of the first Women’s Little 500 Bicycle Race at Indiana University in 1984. She is the founder and president of the New Mexico Spokettes Racing Team. She lives with her fiancé and dog in Albuquerque where she works as a marketing promotions manager and freelance journalist.*



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