

# XTRA! XTRA! RIDE ALL ABOUT IT

*The Xtracycle and its offspring*

*by John Schubert*

Seldom have you seen a more dedicated band of enthusiasts than the owners of the Xtracycle “Sport Utility Bike” (SUB) attachment. They love what they can do with the Xtracycle, which turns virtually any bike into a monster-load hauling *longtail* bike. They carry kayaks, ladders, pallets, guitars, small refrigerators, and adult passengers, not to mention the week’s groceries. They post photos of all these cargos on the web. They go

touring with *all* their gear. Jim Zinn, a handyman in Washington DC, uses one as his work truck.

And even though the Xtracycle is a bolt-on addition to your existing bike, it is anything but makeshift. It is a well designed, rugged, and versatile piece of equipment, made with a keen eye towards sustainability, both in its manufacture and in its use.

Let’s get the numbers out of the way first: the basic Xtracycle costs \$489, lengthens your bike 14.5 inches, and adds 10.37 pounds to the bike’s weight.

The word “basic” is my slightly arbitrary concept. The Xtracycle is sold in modules and accessory kits. What \$489 gets you is the \$239 Free Radical wheelbase lengthening kit, plus the \$250 LongTail kit. You can ride the bike with just the Free Radical installed, but to carry stuff you also need either the Long Tail kit, the touring-oriented \$125 Pannier Kit, or one of their more expensive brethren — the \$335 Family Van kit, the \$399 Carry it All kit or the \$350 Cargo Van kit.

The Long Tail kit (two V-racks, a wooden SnapDeck, and two Freeloader carrying bags) is the most common configuration, and is capacity enough for many folks. It easily packed a week’s worth of my groceries, and you can use it to carry touring gear (packaged in waterproof stuff sacks, please). With more space than conventional panniers offer, you can bring musical instruments,

a larger tent, and the contra dancing clothes.

The Pannier Kit is a pair of racks that allow your Xtracycle to hold a total of four panniers.

If your carrying ambitions grow larger (you wouldn’t be the first to carry surfboards) get one of the larger kits or buy additional carrying components a la carte. The additional components include: Wideloaders, aluminum-tube cargo floors on either side of the rear wheel for hauling larger, bulkier loads. Longloaders, an upright post at the front of the Xtracycle which offers a lash-point for long cargos while also angling them outward to avoid interference

with your legs while pedaling. For carrying passengers, there is the Magic Carpet, a padded seat that goes over the SnapDeck rack top, and small foot rests called Footsies. Accessory child seats are also available. TrayBiens, or many other rooftop bike racks, even mount on the Wideloader bars for carrying additional bicycles.

Our test sample came with a traditional kickstand, which worked fine for groceries.

Xtracycle experts favor the optional \$139 center stand for heavier



*Maya Honeyman, an occupational therapist from Chico, California, is taking full advantage of her Xtracycle. She is currently riding from California to Maine.*