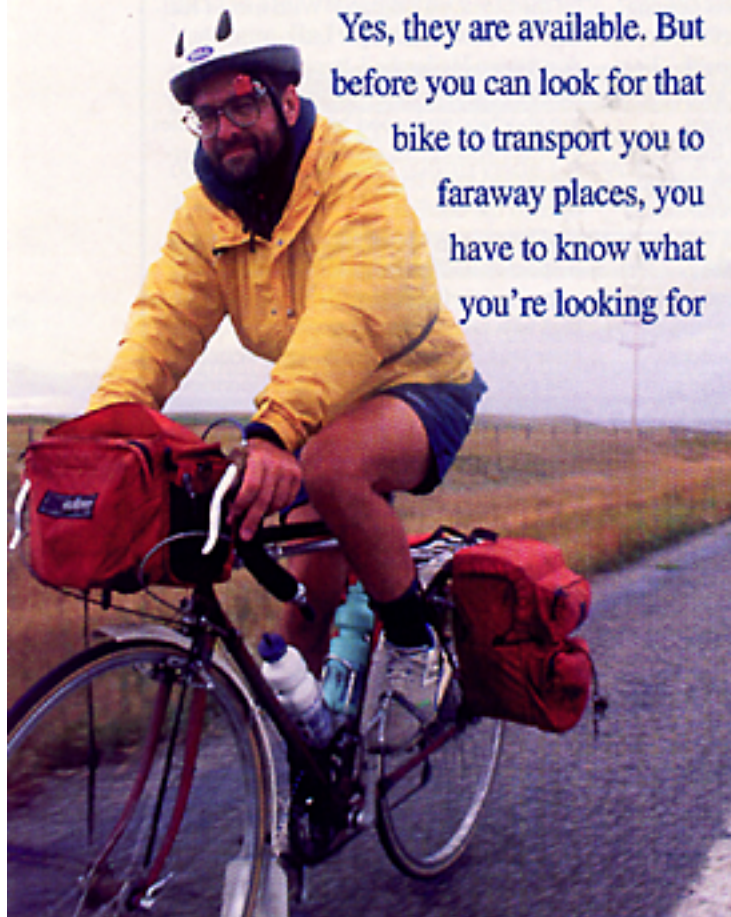


# THE TOURING BIKE LIVES!

Yes, they are available. But before you can look for that bike to transport you to faraway places, you have to know what you're looking for



Almost anything with wheels can be used as a touring bike. People have ridden across the continent on old-fashioned high-wheelers, unicycles, coaster-brake bikes, nervous high-strung racing bikes, and, in the case of my brother-in-law, a 50-pound three-speed Schwinn with a big steel front basket. (There, Jim—36 years after this absurd accomplishment, you finally get your 15 minutes of fame. Bask in it.)

But why would you want to suffer needlessly? Knowing what to look for in a touring bike can get you improvements you didn't know were possible. If you're going to buy a touring bike, you might as well get one that's designed for maximum comfort and safety.

Shopping for a touring bike, however, is complicated by three factors:

- Most bike shops don't cater to tourists.
- Most bike companies don't make touring bikes.

By John Schubert

•The kind of technical information that separates okay touring bikes from really excellent ones is hard to find. Increasingly, it doesn't show up in manufacturers' literature. Moreover, not all tourists are the same. As framebuilder Bruce Gordon points out, just as there are different kinds of racing ( criteriums, time trials, etc.) there are different kinds of touring. Bruce defines the kinds of touring as follows:

**Type One:** Sag-supported touring — offered by most commercial tour operators. You needn't carry anything more than a pocket camera with you, so almost any road bike will do. Skinny tires will work well.

**Type Two:** Self-contained inn-to-inn touring. Now you've got panniers and maybe 10 pounds of clothes in them. For this, most people want slightly wider tires and a triple crankset.

**Type Three:** Self-contained camping touring—the kind the Adventure Cycling Association was founded to promote. Now you have more and bigger panniers. Your bike's weight has tripled. And here is where you discover the inadequacies of a bike that worked

well for types 1 and 2.

Bruce and I agree: if you like the idea of touring — and even if you're new to the sport — you should buy a bike suitable for "Type Three." Why? Such a bike does everything well. It will perform nicely for the unladen riding you do the rest of the year. It's a good all-around bike. But that versatility doesn't work in reverse: a bike designed purely for unladen riding will have serious drawbacks for "Type Three" touring.

Many bike shop employees will tell you, "If you want to go touring, get a mountain bike." This makes me bristle. A salesman who makes that choice for you is lazy and/or ignorant and/or presumptuous. There's a big reason to think twice about getting a mountain bike: Do you want to ride in one basic position all day long?

I really enjoy my mountain bike for an hour or two. After that, I crave the variety of hand positions and narrower hand spacing of my road bike, with its dropped handlebars. The more aerodynamic rider position from the dropped handlebars also lets

you ride faster. Every long-distance tourist has had the thought, "The next 400 miles are nothing but cornfields. Let's get 'em over with." On Adventure Cycling's group trips, the riders with mountain bikes frequently have trouble keeping up with the touring bike riders, because the mountain bike's more wind-catching rider position slows them down.

If you get a mountain bike, you absolutely should get handlebar extensions so you have a variety of hand positions for your long days in the saddle. (If the salesman doesn't suggest that, you've just unearthed a clueless salesman.) Make sure your mountain bike has eyelets to support front and rear pannier racks, and don't buy a bike that won't take two racks. Mountain bikes are unquestionably stouter than touring bikes. Do you need that? Probably not. A good touring bike can take plenty of pot-

## TOURING BIKE MA

■ **Advanced Touring Solutions**, 2117 Delaware Ave., Suite A, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; (408) 457-4426 Fax (408) 425-3810, E-mail: rgrigsby@got.net *Alex Moulton fully suspended APB bike with 20-inch wheels, \$1250-\$1850; add \$500-600 for complete touring package.*

■ **Bianchi USA**, Inc., 21371 Cabot Blvd., Hayward, CA 94545; (510) 264-1001, Fax (510) 264-2099 *"Volpe" touring bike comes with full braze-ons, Shimano RSX STI triple group, 700 X 28c tires, under \$800; "San Remo" touring bike with full braze-ons, Campagnolo Mirage triple group, 700 X 28c tires, under \$1000.*

■ **Bilenky Cycle Works**, Ltd., 5319 N. 2nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19120-3230; (215) 329-4744, Fax (215) 329-5380 *Stock touring frames ("Midlands") from \$850 (lugged) to \$975 (fillet-brazed); custom-sized frame \$1175; complete touring bikes \$1995 and up; tubular chrome-moly touring racks, \$300 front and rear.*

■ **Boulder Bikes**, P.O. Box 1400, Lyons, CO 80540; (303) 823-5021, Fax (303) 823-5025 *Fully suspended "Tourstar" custom bike with Rock Shox Paris Roubaix road fork starting at \$2500.*

■ **Bruce Gordon Cycles**, 613 Second St., Petaluma, CA 94952; Phone and fax (707) 762-5601 Web page: <http://www.veloinq.com/bruce-gordon> *Rock 'n Road Tour" 700c touring bike (8 sizes) with Shimano XT group, up to 700 x 45c tires - \$2145; \$2320 with Gordon racks, front and rear. "Rock 'n Road Tour-Ex" (5 sizes) 26-inch-wheel touring bike for "severe conditions," takes mt. bike tires - \$2145; \$2320 with racks; "BLT" (Basic Loaded Touring) (5 sizes) production touring bike, designed by Bruce Gordon and built in Japan (except for Gordon-built wheels and racks) - \$990 with Shimano Deore LX components, \$1165 with Gordon racks. Available March 1996.*

■ **Cannondale Corp.**, 9 Brookside Pl., Georgetown, CT 06829; (800) 245-3872, Fax (203) 852-9081, E-Mail: [cdale01@interserv.com](mailto:cdale01@interserv.com), Web site: <http://www.cannondale.com> *Offers three models of aluminum touring bikes (T1000, T700 and T400), ranging in price from \$705 to \$1354.*

■ **Co Motion**, 222 Polk St., Eugene, OR 97402; (541) 342-4583 *Touring bikes starting at \$2500.*

■ **Croll**, Suite 4, 1899, (408) 425-3810, E-mail: [tom-bu@netnet.net](mailto:tom-bu@netnet.net)

■ **Davi**, 98121; (408) 425-3810, E-mail: [tom-bu@netnet.net](mailto:tom-bu@netnet.net)

■ **Fat C**, Falls, N, 0250 "made w chains water b

■ **Fuji**, 07436; bike wi mano a Series 35c tire \$900.

■ **Garc**, Road, (800) 5 CX ST and cle Shimar

■ **Gre**, Eugene 687-04 high-pe to ride

■ **Mari**, VT 054 plete to custom combin and Dia frame - and av

■ **Mon**, bridge, 491-72 commu ons, \$1 \$799.9

holes while supporting you and your luggage.

So what separates one touring bike from another?

- Some have plenty of room for wide tires. You want that.

- Some have nice stiff frames and forks that won't sway or shimmy when they're heavily loaded. You want that too.

- Some have more room between the pedals and the rear panniers (a function of



chainstay length) than others. This is of vital interest to you if you have big feet, and some interest even if you have small feet.

Tires: You might find a bike already equipped with wide tires. For example, the Fuji Touring Series I, which we'll be

reviewing in a future article, comes shod with Avocet inverted-tread 700x35C tires, which measure 32 mm (1 1/4 inches) across. (These are far bigger than nominal 1 1/4-inch tires, and that particular bike has enough extra room that it could probably fit the next-larger size, 700x38C.)

If you're looking at a floor model with tires narrower than 35C, ask to see the 35C tires fit onto the bike before you buy the bike. True, you don't need those wider tires for routine around-town riding. But when you're self-supported on the road, and you come across a rough gravel section, you'll just smile. (By the way, I heartily recommended the inverted tread design; it runs smoothly and corners terrifically on the road, and yet affords traction on unpaved roads and smooth trails.)

Shimmy: Regarding the nice stiff frames and forks, framebuilder Gordon

## E MANUFACTURERS

■ **Croll Cycles, Inc.**, 718 Washington Ave. N., Suite 404, Minneapolis, MN 55401; (612) 339-1899, (800) 944-2453, Fax (612) 339-6722 *Custom-built touring bike with Campagnolo components, \$1350.*

■ **Davidson**, 2116 Western Ave., Seattle, WA 98121; (800) 292-5374; Fax (206) 441-1815 *Custom-built frames and bikes.*

■ **Fat City Cycles**, P.O. Box 1439, South Glens Falls, NY 12803; (518) 747-8620, Fax (518) 747-0250 *"Wicked Lite," mountain bike frame and fork made with long-distance touring in mind, 17 1/8" chainstays, eyelets front and rear, two sets of water bottle mounts. \$950 for frame and fork.*

■ **Fuji**, 118 Bauer Dr., P.O. Box 60, Oakland, NJ 07436; (800) 631-8474 *Touring Series I touring bike with full braze-ons, 700 X 35c tires and Shimano and Sugino components, \$660; Touring Series II touring bike with full braze-ons, 700 X 35c tires and Shimano RSX STI triple group, \$900.*

■ **Gardin Bicycle Corporation**, 3610 Mavis Road, Mississauga, Ontario L5C 1W2 CANADA (800) 527-4612, Fax (905) 279-1628 *"Tour 400 CX STI" touring bike with 700x30c touring tires and clearance for fenders, full touring braze-ons, Shimano touring/hybrid 400CX group.*

■ **Green Gear Cycling**, 4065 W. 11th Ave., #14, Eugene, OR 97405; (503) 687-0487, Fax (503) 687-0403, E-mail: friday@11x.com *"Bike Friday" high-performance travel bike for touring, custom fit to rider, \$895-\$1500.*

■ **Marinoni USA Inc.**, P.O. Box 187, Bakersfield, VT 05441; (802) 827-3647 Phone and fax *Complete touring bikes with "Turismo" frame (stock or custom sizes) and Campagnolo triple group. Also, combination touring group with Shimano drivetrain and Dia Compe cantilevers. Custom geometry frame - \$725; stock frame - \$625. Call for price and availability of complete bikes.*

■ **Montague Corp.**, 432 Columbia St., Cambridge, MA 02140; (617) 491-7200, Fax (617) 491-7207 *The "Urban," folding bike geared toward commuting and long-distance touring, full braze-ons, Shimano derailleurs, Sugino triple, Gripshift, \$799.95.*

■ **Mountain Goat Cycles, Inc.**, P.O. Box 3923, Chico, CA 95927; (916) 342-4628, Fax (916) 342-4647 *"Route 66" mountain bike made with long-distance touring in mind. Lowrider rack mounts and fender eyes, rack mounts on rear, cantilever bosses, etc. \$929 frame only; Complete bike: \$1899 with Shimano LX; \$2100 with Shimano XT.*

■ **Nevil Cycles**, Rt. 1 Box 213-A, Vilas, NC 28692; (704) 963-4174 *Custom touring frames ranging from \$599 to \$1119.*

■ **Original Otis Guy Cycles**, 115 Ridge Road, Fairfax, CA 94930; (415) 456-4132, Fax (415) 453-9650 *Custom-built touring bikes with Softride suspension system, \$2500 and up.*

■ **Porter Custom Bicycles**, 2909 Arno St., NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107; (505) 345-8441 Phone and fax *Custom steel silver-brazed touring frames using Columbus tubing, \$1000-\$1600.*

■ **Rivendell**, 1547 Palos Verdes #402, Walnut Creek, CA 94596; (510) 933-7304, Fax (510) 933-7305 *"All-Rounder" silver-brazed touring frameset with eyelets for racks, fenders and 3 water bottles, \$975. Complete bikes with 26" wheels (accepts up to 1.9" tires with fenders), Campy, Suntour, Ritchey and other components, \$1600-\$2300.*

■ **Romic Cycle Co., Inc.**, 4434 Steffani Lane, Houston, TX 77041; (713) 466-7806 *Five touring bikes ranging in price from \$1599 to \$2179, without pedals. Uses both Campagnolo and Shimano components. Custom-designed frame available for additional \$240.*

■ **Softride Bicycles**, P.O. Box 9709, Bellingham, WA 98227; (800) 557-6387, Fax (360) 647-1884, America Online - SOFTRIDE4U, Internet - http://www.cyclelink.com/softride *"Traveler" with Shimano RSX-triple and RSX-STI brake levers/shifters, Softride carbon beam rear suspension, \$1360.*

■ **Steelman Cycles**, 3600 Haven #5, Redwood City, CA 94063; (415) 364-3939, Fax (415) 364-4029 *Custom touring frames starting at \$1399; bike build kits- add \$869 to \$1700, Shimano or Campagnolo; offers Bruce Gordon racks.*

■ **Ted Wojcik Custom Bicycles**, 4 Poplar St., Amesbury, MA 01913; (508) 388-4150, Fax (508) 388-7919 *"Grand Touring Frameset" with full braze-ons and clearance for 700 x 38c tires, \$1595.*

■ **Terry Precision Cycling for Women**, 1704 Wayneport Road, Macedon, NY 14502; (800) 289-8379 *"Classic" bike features Campagnolo Ergopower shifters and TA Alize triple crank, \$1670.*

■ **Ti Cycles**, 824 Post Ave., Seattle, WA 98104; (206) 624-9697, Fax (206) 624-9695 *Custom built, any color, any geometry, full braze-ons, steel touring frame \$890; titanium touring frame \$2145; complete bike - titanium \$3500; steel \$2200 (pedals not included).*

■ **Trek Bicycle Corporation**, 801 W. Madison, Waterloo, WI 53594; (414) 478-2191, Fax (414) 478-2607 *Offers Trek 520 with 700 x 28c tires, STI shifters, rear rack and full braze-ons, \$1100.*

■ **Waterford Precision Cycles**, 816 W. Bakke Ave., Waterford, WI 53185; (414) 534-4190, Fax (414) 534-4194 *"Model 1900 Adventure Cycle" frame & fork \$1100, full braze-ons including front and rear rack mounts and fender mounts, stainless steel rear vertical dropouts, and clearance for 700 X 40c tires plus fenders. Complete bikes: \$1900-\$2900. Designed with input from Adventure Cycling members.*

■ **Yamaguchi Hand-Made Bicycles**, P.O. Box 10382, Colorado Springs, CO 80932; (719) 578-5524 *Stock Touring frame (5 sizes) \$1200, Full Order Custom Geometry \$1600.*



Peter Graf, an analytical chemist from Basel, Switzerland, who tours every summer chose this set up for riding the Cycle Montana last year.



likes to tell a story about that: Last year, he spoke at several bicycle clubs, and always had the following exchange:

“I asked, ‘Who here has ridden down a long steep hill and had the bike start to shimmy?’ There’d be a maniacal giggle, and everyone would raise his or her hand.

“And then, all the people would want to come up to me and tell me about the great touring bikes they owned. I’d say, ‘The one that’s hard to control on downhills?’ And they’d say, ‘Well, that’s only some of the time.’”

That “some of the time” could scare you out of 10 years’ growth. Or worse. It’s more likely to occur with lighter, less rigid frames — particularly if the forks and top tube are extra-light gauge. That’s another reason to avoid the “racing bike with triple” models. Unfortunately, few manufacturers publish their tube gauges anymore. The old standard in steel frames was to use a top tube of one inch outside diameter and 0.6 or

0.7 mm wall thickness (swelling an additional 0.3 mm at the butts at each end). The 0.7 makes a great touring bike. The 0.6 might work for lighter-duty touring. You can find bikes with 0.5 and even 0.4; those bikes shouldn’t ever touch a pannier.

Some bikes now use a larger, and therefore stiffer, top tube, of 1 1/8-inch outside diameter. That’s desirable. (So is a Cannondale, which, by virtue of its mega-stiff aluminum technology, will never have any of these problems.)

Similarly, you’ll probably see a variety of fork blades. Beefier is better—but once again, manufacturers seldom tell you how beefy it is. A fork made to look like a frail racing fork may have nice stout wall thicknesses. One made to look like a mountain bike fork almost certainly does. Insist on mounting bosses for low-mount pannier racks.

Heel clearance: Heel clearance depends on the size of your rear panniers, how far

back on the rack you mount the panniers, your shoe size, and chainstay length. Chainstays vary from a low of about 16 inches in racing bikes to a high of about 18 inches in some touring bikes. Gordon, ever outspoken on the issue, believes 17 1/8 inches (43.5 mm) is a minimum length for chainstays. It so happens that I have smallish feet (men’s size 8) so I can get away with slightly smaller chainstays than that (say, down to 16 3/4 inches) Your needs may vary. (You measure the chainstay by taking the distance from the rear axle to the center of the crank spindle.)

You’ll notice I haven’t said one word about gearing or frame angles. Why?

Bikes have gobs of gears these days. That battle is pretty much over. Frame angles have always been designed primarily to fit the rider, who doesn’t change shape whether he’s racing or touring. Years of measuring frames has taught me that even the steering geometry is similar between racing and touring frames, despite unending folklore about “the angles.” So instead of chasing these wild geese, focus on getting the tire clearance, rack mounts, and nice stout frame that you need.

And send us a postcard from some far-away place. It should read, “Now that I’m out here, I don’t notice the bike itself. I notice the scenery, the people, and the joy of riding. The bike is so reliable that I don’t have to notice it.” That’s what it’s all about. ●

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*Technical Editor John Schubert purchased “touring” bikes in 1965, 1972, 1979, 1983, 1986 and 1991. The first two proved to be not suitable for touring; the rest are doing fine.*