



# FINDING THE RIGHT PAIRING

BY **NICK LEGAN**

→ IT OCCURRED to me recently that while many of you read each and every gear and bike review that *Adventure Cyclist* publishes, you may not have any idea how — or in some cases why — we go about producing them. This also got me thinking about my role as Technical Editor. What's my mission here? Part of that is up to you, but here's where I'm at with it.

I'm here to challenge you, to encourage you to think about new ways to convey yourself and your gear from A to B. Thankfully, I'm not here to shill for anyone or any manufacturers. But when those people or makers produce something noteworthy, it's my job to help inform you. I'm here to provide information and talk about what has historically worked for adventure cyclists, but also to point out new options and new approaches to travel by bicycle. This is why you'll see us reviewing carbon fiber bikes and parts, exploring electronic shifting, and looking at bikepacking bikes and bags.

Here's an example: 700c x 28–32mm tires have been the default choice for road touring in the modern age. On the mountain bike side of things, 27.5in. (also known as 650b) has been very popular, essentially replacing 26in. and complementing 29in. options. WTB recently launched with a 650b x 47mm tire that fits into many frames made to clear 700c x 40mm tires. Coined "Road Plus," it's a fantastic option for touring. It retrofits onto many

current disc brake bikes and offers the same effective diameter as 700c x 28mm so gearing and geometry are unaffected. You simply get a more comfortable ride with a negligible weight penalty.

Here's another example, one that might be even harder to swallow. Triple-chainring drivetrains provide a huge gearing range — that's why touring cyclists love them. But with options increasingly limited and a good chunk of the

industry trying to kill the front derailer, single-chainring (1x) drivetrains with wide-range cassettes are increasingly common. Instead of ignoring them, I

requested a groupset and am currently doing a long-term test of a 1x drivetrain. I know that this is very non-traditional. That's exactly why I'm spending so much time on it. Will it work out? I'll let you know.

I also acknowledge that I'm younger and (probably) fitter than the average member. I use a power meter and heart rate monitor and upload every workout to a website for review and analysis by my wife/coach, Kristen. I don't say this to brag. I point it out because that self-awareness combined with an understanding of my audience informs my work. Part of my job is writing for riders who want a lower gear and a higher handlebar. I take this seriously, but I have a lot of fun doing my work.

Companies approach me on a daily basis asking me to



ILLUSTRATION: MIKE REISEL

review their latest product. Over the years, I've gotten better and better at saying no. It pays to be discerning. I select the bikes and gear that would best serve you, the readers. When a new technology comes along, it's rarely engineered or designed with touring cyclists in mind. Our staff and I look for places where an overlap occurs between a product's intended purpose and how we adventurous cyclists might use it. I also look for common ground in how I would react to a piece of gear and how you would like it. If it ticks all these boxes and fits into our production cycle, we request the product.

In the case of a bicycle, I then assemble the bike myself. As a former professional mechanic, I learn a lot about a bike during this process. I weigh the stock bicycle, then install my personal saddle, my personal pedals, and often change the stem length. We're testing 20 or more bikes in a given volume — obviously we can't take every bike on a tour, but we do ride each machine regularly over the course of three weeks minimum.

We also regularly audit what we're reviewing. We understand that our members own and ride a variety of bikes. Touring bikes will always be our bread and butter, but mountain bikes, gravel bikes, fat bikes, recumbents, folding bikes, and tandems all have a place in our hearts.

Finally, if our reviews are mostly positive, there is a reason: we do our homework. We request bicycles and gear that looks promising. We choose to review quality goods. Why waste our time or yours on suspect components? We have high expectations for much of the gear we review, especially those with impressive price tags. But we also strive to put them into context and point out weaknesses.

If you have any thoughts on what we're reviewing or what you would like to see reviewed, don't hesitate to email me at [nlegan@adventurecycling.org](mailto:nlegan@adventurecycling.org). I love the feedback and enjoy getting to know my fellow members. Ride on! 

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BY NICK LEGAN AND ALEX STRICKLAND

# GEARED UP

Full reviews + more gear at [adventurecycling.org/0817-gear](http://adventurecycling.org/0817-gear)

## Swift Industries Sugarloaf Basket Bag, \$150



Sure, "basketpacking" might not be the ideal way to carry gear over rough terrain or the most efficient use of space for a long, self-supported tour. But for almost everything else — from grocery runs to overnights and beyond — a basket is pretty darn handy. Although I've jokingly referred to the 11.5-liter Sugarloaf bag as a "murse" when carting it around off the bike, it's become an everyday

accessory for my cycling. A large main compartment can eat a change of clothes (with shoes), and front and rear pockets are perfect for phones and maps. Side straps and buckles for the Wald 137 basket hold the bag in place, even though I've only clipped them on one or two occasions since the fit is so dialed that I'm not worried about the Sugarloaf making a jailbreak. A hardcore touring tool? Perhaps not. But it's a perfect solution for cyclists of nearly every other stripe. I like it so much, I'm buying another. —AS



## Rithey WCS Carbon Link Flexlogic, \$200

Designed to deflect when you hit a bump while seated, the Rithey Flexlogic seatpost does so without pivot points or elastomers. A specific carbon fiber layup allows for movement without the weight of more complicated suspension seatposts. Of course, there isn't quite as much compliance either. But if you want just a little more comfort, look no further. —NL



## FSA Adventure drop bar, \$36

With a short reach and fairly shallow drop, FSA's Adventure drop bar offers a ovalized top section for increased hand support. A mild 12-degree flare to the drops opens up your chest for better breathing as you reach lower and simultaneously lends increased control. On the road, whether dusty or paved, the Adventure is sublimely comfortable for this reviewer. Made from double-butted, shot-peened aluminum, the Adventure is a good value at less than \$40. —NL

## Gregory Drift 10 hydration pack, \$115



A good hydration pack can be the difference between

discomfort and dehydration and a nice, enjoyable long ride. Gregory's well-designed Drift 10 is large enough for extended jaunts but small enough to discourage overpacking. Its adjustable-height waist belt accommodates a wide range of torso lengths, and an included tool pack is a great added feature. Even the reservoir is nice, with an integrated hook for drying between uses. —NL