



ROAD TEST

Bike Friday All-Packa

words and photos by
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HANDLEBAR
Bike Friday Packalope,
splittable alt-bar

FORK
Two triple mounts, rack
and fender mounts

QUICK RELEASES
Seatstay, steerer
tube, axles

FRAME
Custom U.S.-made, 4130
chromoly, rack and fender
mounts, two triple mounts,
one quadruple mount

TIRES
Odyssey Aitken Knobby
20 x 2.35in.

BIKE FRIDAY ALL-PACKA

<p>GENERAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEST USES: Gravel riding, light mountain biking, bikepacking • PRICE: \$2,495 (complete) • WEIGHT: 26.2 lbs. • AVAILABLE SIZES: Custom • SIZE TESTED: Medium-ish 	<p>NOTABLE COMPONENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASSETTE: Meroca 11-40T, 9spd • CRANKSET: Shimano Sora • REAR DERAILER: microSHIFT Marvo LT • BRAKES: Zoom DB-680 • BRAKE LEVERS/SHIFTER: Avid • ROTOR: 160mm 	<p>GEOMETRY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHEELBASE: 1050mm • WHEELSIZE: 20in. • TIRE CLEARANCE: 2.4in. • BB HEIGHT: 273mm 	<p>MISC. NOTES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIME TO FOLD: 30 seconds (including steerer tube), 10 seconds ("quick fold") • TIME TO UNFOLD: 30 seconds, 10 seconds • FOLDED SIZE: 36 x 29 x 14in. • IDEAL RIDER WEIGHT: up to 220 lbs. • IDEAL RIDER HEIGHT: from 4'6" to 5'8" (but can fit up to 6'4")
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► I have a *thing* for weird bikes. I learned to weld in 2019 by fabricating a double-decker tall bike, which opened my eyes to a new world of bike possibilities. By building and riding the tall bike around Missoula, I gained both literal and metaphorical perspective: after being a daily cyclist for a decade, seeing the same environment from four feet higher allowed me to touch tree branches, forced me to navigate bike path tunnels with excited anticipation, and made me practice a whole new way of mounting and dismounting a bicycle. The silly spectacle of riding such a contraption also made me feel like a kid again. Not only was I reapproaching my relationship to cycling by riding this bike with humor, but I was also turning heads and catalyzing mystified grins in pedestrians (especially children) who marveled in the novelty as I passed by. Weird bikes brought me back to the childlike curiosity and wonder that I love about bicycles after losing a bit of the magic by getting sucked into *span-dex-this* and *gravel-grinding-that* for some years.

If the tall bike is the slow, elegant giraffe of bicycles, let me introduce you to the corgi: Bike Friday's All-Packa. (You expected me to introduce you to the alpaca, but no — the corgi. Hang with me.) Corgis have a magnetic cuteness to them — I've never seen someone walk past a corgi and not let out a soft giggle while gluing their eyes to it as if they're flirtatiously trying to convince it to be their best friend and summon it closer. Despite corgis' seemingly impractical features that make them so adorable, they were bred intentionally as working dogs in England and Scotland. Their short stature allows them to be quick and agile

while evading the hooves of livestock, and their delightful, docked tails are not just to magnify the creature's cuteness; they're shortened to decrease the liability of having them stepped on by their herding target. Yeah, corgis might be a little slower than a greyhound because of their short legs, but they weren't designed to be the fastest dog on the racetrack. Their breeders had more important priorities in mind.

If you're sick of my flawless corgi metaphor, allow me to end your misery. Bike Friday's All-Packa is designed with one main priority: capability. If you're familiar with Bike Friday, you know the small Eugene, Oregon-based bike manufacturer specializes in folding bikes. Founded in 1992 by brothers Hanz and Alan Scholz, Bike Friday offers a whole slew of folding bike options from touring bikes to city bikes, tandems, and now eBikes. Their latest design, the All-Packa, is billed as a bikepacking folding bike, which should be music to any bikepacker's ears: it's a folding bike that's capable of off-road adventures! Easier to fly with, easier to store! The All-Packa is custom fit for riders from four-foot-six to six-foot-four, and it's suggested that riders up to 220 pounds will have optimal ride quality (riders up to 330 pounds should check out Bike Friday's Diamond Llama).

Bike Friday is charmingly thorough with the instructional materials it provides when shipping a bike to a new owner. In addition to a heartwarming "welcome to the family" letter, they also provide several pamphlets of Bike Friday-related materials. Having never assembled a Bike Friday bicycle, I used their step-by-step guide and had no issues. If you're even the slightest bit confident wrenching on a bike and

possess a set of Allen keys, you'll be fine. I was wheeling the bike around Adventure Cycling's office an hour after opening the box (half of that time was spent unwrapping the meticulous packaging protecting the bike — Bike Friday is a business steeped in care). They also supply manuals and videos for packing their bikes for flying; they currently recommend the Samsonite Novaire 30 airline-approved suitcase.

Bike Friday currently offers All-Packa complete builds starting at \$2,495, or framesets for \$1,595. Each frame is fine-tuned and customized for its rider. When ordering a complete build, customers have a great deal of customization to choose from depending on their gearing, color, and size preferences. You can even add electric assist. The All Terrain Package add-on includes hybrid hydraulic disc brakes, all bearings in sealed cartridges, an upgraded crankset, and tubeless-compatible rims. I highly recommend adding on the kickstand as well.

The bike I tested was not upgraded with the All Terrain Package, though if I were to purchase one for myself, I would upgrade for the tubeless-compatible rims alone. Even so, all the components worked great on the various terrain I tested. I was especially impressed by the Zoom DB-680 mechanical disc brakes and Odyssey Aitken Knobby tires, which were some of the more reliable mountain bike tires I've ridden when it comes to cornering and gripping loose dirt.

The baseline parts may be underwhelming to more experienced cyclists, but these components were tested rigorously to provide a reliable ride — not to mention this is an incredibly affordable custom, U.S.-made folding bike due

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to these spec decisions. Occasionally, due to ever-changing supply, baseline components are sometimes substituted with approval from the customer. Bike Friday will work with you to meet your personal vision if you desire higher-quality components.

I asked the expert and All-Packa designer, Willie Hatfield, to articulate how gearing and tire clearance play together in the bike's geometry:

“Some chains and rear derailleur cages in the lowest gears, especially with narrower chainline cranksets, will limit the maximum tire clearance. Mountain bike 1x cassettes don't fit and have gearing that's far too low to be practical. Road drivetrains have too limited range. The best balance I've found is up to a 40T cassette and a mid-cage rear derailleur with a road-sized chainring, but the derailleur is close enough to the tire that small differences in adjustment can cause clearance issues.

To improve this situation, I've tried a variety of mid-cage derailleurs, from MicroSHIFT and other manufacturers. I believe your bike has a MicroSHIFT Marvo mid-cage derailleur, and we have recently switched to the MicroSHIFT R9 mid-cage derailleur because even though it is a “road” derailleur, it has stronger springs for better chain retention and a differently shaped cage for greater tire clearance.

For our All-Packas with 2x9 drivetrains, we are going to be spec'ing and recommending tires under 2.3in. so that



this drivetrain has sufficient clearance. If All-Packa riders want maximum tire clearance, I recommend a 1x drivetrain.”

My first real outing atop the All-Packa was an afternoon adventure to ride nine miles from my home along a separated bike path that follows the slow, meandering Bitterroot River. Once in Lolo, Montana, we would begin the second phase of our quest: packrafting down the river back home. My two companions were both on standard bicycles: a Surly Ghost Grappler and a 2012 Bianchi Volpe. Regardless, the process was pretty much the same for all three of us. Because it was an afternoon trip, we didn't need to bring anything other than our rafts, paddles, personal flotation devices, one inflation bag, and some snacks. I also packed my camera in a fanny pack. With some creative strapping, I attached my paddle (which can be broken down in half) to the All-Packa's seatpost and fork. Everything else went on the Packalope bar, Bike Friday's alt-handlebar that splits in half for easy folding and has bullhorns for extra hand positions and attachment points. After a requisite stop for ice cream at the Dairy Queen in Lolo, we unloaded our Alpaca Rafts (no relation to the bike) from our handlebars and began inflating them for the return journey.

The biggest logistical difference between my friends and me was the process of strapping bikes to rafts. Where they had to remove both wheels and stack their relatively massive bicycles to the front of their rafts, it took me about 20 seconds to release the All-Packa's quick-release points and fold it into a compact bundle that was easily attached using two Voile straps. The only additional steps I had to take were removing one pedal to avoid puncturing the raft, and removing the steerer tube with handlebars still attached (the All-Packa's steerer tube is attached to the fork with a

quick-release and stabilized laterally by a small retractable button).

After double-checking that our bikes were secure, we loaded them into the river and enjoyed a mellow two-hour float back to a river access point right off the bike path. After pulling our rafts onto the shore, we began the quick deflation of our rafts, rebuilt our bikes, strapped everything back together, and gleefully pedaled a mile back home. Rebuilding the All-Packa was as simple as reattaching the steerer tube and pedal, unfolding the hinges, and then securing the frame with two quick-releases. This perfect first date with the All-Packa had me easily envisioning a whole life of adventurous possibilities together.

With 20 x 2.35in. tires, the All-Packa can handle a shockingly broad variety of terrain. Designed with riding logging roads and flowy singletrack in mind, I felt comfortable on any terrain up to medium-technical singletrack. The small wheels and low center of gravity are confidence-inspiring on trails because bailing is super low consequence with such a low step-through height, though I'll admit even the smallest rocky section felt like a black diamond rock garden to me. It really thrives on flowy singletrack (for instance, I could not stop yelling “THIS THING RIPS” as I was swooping back and forth on one of Missoula's newest ridgeline trails) and manages fine enough on rocky, bumpy trails. By the end of a two-mile section of bumps, I was ready to return to the glorious swoops.

When snow hit and actually stayed around in Missoula only a few weeks after I'd been riding the All-Packa, I headed south to Tucson, Arizona, to continue riding. The folded All-Packa took up about one third of the cargo space that a standard gravel bike did in the bed of my truck. In Tucson, I had my heart set on a bike overnight along a mellow section of the Arizona Trail. I loaded up the All-Packa and got dropped off at the Loma Alta Trailhead, where I'd begin the 12-mile ride to the Pistol Hill Road trailhead.



The All-Packa takes some creativity to pack all the camping gear needed for an overnight, but the folks at Bike Friday designed it with many packing possibilities in mind. Although there are Bike Friday-specific bike-packing bags on the market now, I used only equipment I already owned for bikepacking on my standard bikes: a Revelate Designs Pronghorn handlebar harness, an Oveja Negra Half Pack framebag, an old Blackburn Outpost seatbag, two Salsa Anything Cages on the fork, and the PRO BikeGear Smart Bottle Cage System on the top tube. With this setup and a large hip bag, I was able to carry everything I needed for an overnight, including a hefty 0°F sleeping bag. If I was going on a longer tour, I'd probably consider adding some racks and panniers — many standard racks will fit on the All-Packa, sometimes requiring longer struts to reach rear mounts. The bike can still fold with most racks, but check out Bike Friday's own front and rear pannier racks to take the guessing out.

Loaded up, the All-Packa performed as you'd expect: stable, agile, and really comfortable. Even riding through sandy arroyos, I was surprised at how well the 2.35in. tires handled the terrain. I only got off the bike to push up steeper rocky sections — the pedal clearance is not as generous as a standard bike, given the low bottom bracket height.

The big question I've been asking myself while I've been testing Bike Friday's All-Packa is: would I trade having the familiarity of a standard touring bike for the convenience of a folding bike? I think your answer lies in the ethos of your desired adventure. The way I most like to travel by bike is not dependent on being super fast or predictable, like a greyhound — I'd rather approach my adventures with creativity. How can I incorporate multimodal transportation? How do I get from the bike path to the river? What's the best way to portage a bicycle on my back for bushwhacking, or fit it into an Uber? Though yours might be different, I know my answer: I'll pick the corgi. 🐕

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