

TESTED

Five of the Best... BIKE TRAILERS

For many, traditional bicycle touring brings to mind panniers strapped or clipped to racks on the bike. A great way of doing things, but it does entail decking out a bike with racks, and it can put a lot of strain on the bike if riding on less well maintained roads or trails, especially with heavy loads. A solution that gives flexibility

in your choice of steed (they work with mountain or touring bikes), more versatility in load carrying capability and better handling on rougher tracks, is to consider a trailer. A trailer also enables you to 'unhitch' your bike, for any messing about you may want to do once your day's destination is reached, a

particularly good option for mountain bikes.

Most trailers fall into one of two camps, single wheeled or two wheeled. Both types have their plus and minus points. For the most part single wheeled trailers cope better with rougher terrain, but can 'steer' the rest of the bike, whilst two

wheeled trailers are sturdy and won't steer the bike as much, but can be unwieldy off road. Either type will undoubtedly broaden the horizons of any aspirant bicycle tourist. They may also have the bonus of persuading you that you CAN live without that car a lot of the time.

Weber Monoporter £325

German engineering is immediately apparent here, although the instructions aren't the easiest, and some of the attachments are a little fiddly and plasticky. Another single wheel design, this one folds for storage into its own kit bag. It is equipped with some suspension, but the low slung nature of the plastic load bed could cause problems on rougher tracks and potholes, so it's probably better suited to roads or well surfaced trails. A locking attachment mechanism makes it perfect for day to day use, as it can be locked and left. In use, it moved well, particularly at speed, with no real deficit in bike handling. Supplied with an excellent dry-bag which clips directly to the load-bed. Max load 25kg.



Revolution Cargo '08 Load Trailer £125

Similar in design to the BOB, the Revolution trailer can, however, be folded up for storage. Unfortunately, this removes slightly from the rigidity of the design, leaving it feeling distinctly less solid, and the general construction standard is not quite as high as the others either. The attachment mechanism is good, but a little fiddly. The wheel at the back does mean that bike handling is affected under load (as with the BOB), and we'd be circumspect to say the least about loading it up with 30kg, the suggested max capacity. It comes with a capacious dry bag. A good budget option but lacking the build quality of others on test.



BOB Ibox £335 (£360 with bag)

Bomb proof construction and the best and easiest attachment mechanism of any on test make this a great choice for any serious offroad adventure, and the rear shock on the Ibox (the Yak has no suspension for those who prefer a simpler design) makes for a smoother off road response. It's stable when pedalling, although steers the bike a little, and the solid build does come with a weight penalty, more noticeable on uphill. The max load capacity is quoted as around 25kg, which can be loaded up in a multitude of ways, including the optional waterproof bag to match. One of the major downsides to the BOB is its storage size.



Extrawheel £155 (£189 with two 40 litre bags, £199 with two 60 litre bags)

Effectively an 'extra wheel' for your bike, using either a 700c or 26" wheel with the load carried in a mesh cargo net on either side. Optional waterproof bags come in 40litre or 60 litre sizes. This design keeps the load weight low and balanced, with nearly all the weight on the trailer, rather than the bike, minimising the effect on handling. It's also the lightest, tracks well, both on and off road, and inspires utter confidence even on the most technical trails, although the nets are prone to catch on undergrowth on narrow paths. The wheel can also double as an emergency spare, should you need it when on tour. Max load 30kg.

BEST BUY



Carry Freedom Y-Large £210

The only two wheel trailer on test, this is a nicely constructed, solid offering from Scotland. It's a simple wooden flatbed trailer with grippy surface, that can be used with boxes, bags or on its own with straps for awkward shaped objects. The trailer of choice for canoeists, there's even an optional longer arm for long objects such as boats. With a massive load capability of 90kg, the only limit to what you carry is your imagination. Trialled with 60kg on the back, the bike still handled well, with the weight all solidly on the trailer rather than bike. Two wheels make this more suited to road use or on well surfaced trails. Attachment is single sided and easy, although some MTB quick release skewers might not be quite long enough. Carry Freedom also do a blueprint for an amazing Bamboo trailer that they are offering for a small donation, to encourage use of bikes rather than cars, particularly in developing countries.



Contacts

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