

About the bikes



Yes, in this case, it really is all about the bike.

Touring bikes are actually quite rare. Well, at least purpose built ones are. Most non-cyclists wouldn't see the difference between a touring bike with drop handle bars and any other 'racer' but they really are a different

species.

Firstly, they are usually made from steel rather than aluminium or carbon fibre (yes I know there are titanium ones) and secondly they are subtly different in geometry. Both the material and the geometry contribute to the more relaxed and less hurried ride that you get on a tourer. The steel adds a bit more flexibility while the more open angles of the frame soften the ride by creating more give in the frame. Steel also has the advantage of being easily welded in just about any garage or

engineering workshop in the world should you be unlucky enough to break your frame whilst on tour. Uncommon, but not unheard of.

The other difference in the basic touring frame is that it will have specific brazed on mounting points for pannier racks and maybe extra bottle carrying mounts. Other than that it all comes down to the components used to build up the bike.

Tourers need sturdy wheels that will take heavy duty tyres and carry loads of weight and they also need plenty of room to fit

full mudguards. They need very low gearing to be able to drag all that weight up the hills and most importantly, a saddle that is comfortable for up to eight hours at a time. Handle bars tend to be a personal preference so straight, drop and butterfly bars are all commonly used. Finally, one of the joys of touring bikes, in my opinion, is that they nearly all come with fascinating home made bodes and workarounds that make them unique to their owners.

So that is the background, now here are a few specifics for those

who find such things interesting.
For those who don't, [here are some penguins falling over.](#)_ (Best viewed with YouTube)

My bike is based on a hand built frame made to my own measurements and specifications by Dave Yates. Dave built around 12,000 frames for his employers, M Steel Cycles before setting up his own business. He knows a thing or two about frame building. Material is Reynolds 531.

Lack of funds after paying for the frame, forks and Campag headset meant that I cobbled the bike

together with various bits from EBay but I have gradually upgraded most of it over the last six years. The components now read as follows:



- Hand built wheels using ST19 rims on Shimano 105 hubs.
- Shwalbe Marathon Plus Tyres
- SRAM Truvativ cranks (EBay)
- Shimano M520 pedals
- Shimano rings (can't remember the numbers and can't be bothered counting, sorry)
Edit: 50, 40, 28
- Shimano rear cassette 12 – 32 (or is it 11 – 32?)
- Chain, no idea but it does have a speed link in it which I think is a no brainer
- Shimano Tiagra long arm rear mech
- Shimano Sora Triple front

mech

- Bars – drop. Cheap off EBay.
Can't remember what they are.
- Shimano Flight Deck
Brake/gear levers
- Shimano RX100 Dual pivot
brakes
- Brooks B17 saddle
- TorTech rear rack
- Tubus front rack

Gill's bike was built by Paul Hewitt of Leyland. It's a Cheviot tourer based on a Taiwan manufactured frame (also Reynolds 531) and assembled to Paul's exacting standards. Paul is very

particular about fitting and uses his own purpose built fitting jig to get every measurement spot on before deciding on frame size and position for seat, bars, crank length etc. When Gill collected the bike it was perfect from the day it left the shop and nothing has required adjusting since, other than saddle angle. The components are all as supplied five years ago:



- Hand built wheels using ST19 rims on Deore hubs
- Schwalbe Marathon Plus Tyres
- Deore cranks
- Shimano M520 pedals
- Deore chainset 48, 36, 26

- Rear cassette Deore 11 – 34
- Chain HG53 (but may have been replaced, can't remember)
- Rear mech Deore
- Front mech Tiagra triple
- Bars, drop, Omega Compact (for little hands)
- Tiagra STI Brake/Gear shifters
- Tektro CR520 Cantilever brakes
- Selle Italia Lady specific leather saddle
- Maddison rear rack
- Blackburn low rider front rack

Both bikes have been to [Colin Gardner The Bike Magician](#) for a Gold service before the trip which involves stripping back to the frame and servicing/replacing every moving part. They both now ride like a dream. Thanks Colin.

We'll do luggage another time. That's quite enough tech stuff for one post. Feel free to ask questions but please don't expect knowledgeable answers