

Surly Long-Haul Trucker

by Jan Heine

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The Surly Long-Haul Trucker is a competent touring bike offered at an astonishingly low price. It offers a well-made frame with quality parts. On the down side, its rear-loading geometry compromises its handling somewhat, both loaded and unloaded. The bike's performance and comfort are best when fully loaded. The Long-Haul Trucker is less suited for riders looking for an event or randonneur bike.

Introduction

Perhaps the purest joy of cycling comes from unsupported touring. When you carry your food and shelter on your bike, there is no schedule to keep, no training goal to meet, and no need to be anywhere in time for dinner. Exploring backroads, you can live in the moment, knowing that when you don't want to ride further, you will find a spot to pitch your tent, light the stove, and spend the night. The added weight of 15+ kg (33+ lbs.) of camping gear slows the responses of your bike, making each section of road one to savor, rather than a fleeting glimpse. A good touring bike still gives

all the right sensations, and is as much fun to ride as a racing bike.

Some of my best memories of bicycle touring are from my days in graduate school. Taking off for a few days was not a problem, as my responsibilities were fewer than today. My Mercian "King of Mercia" touring bike¹ with its frame made from Reynolds 531 "Super Tourist" tubing and its Blackburn aluminum racks was considered state-of-the-art when I bought it in 1990, and it served me well. Its shortcomings were not apparent until I started to ride an Alex Singer camping bike² that allowed me to ride no-hands, do trackstands and corner faster than on a racing bike, all while carrying a full camping load.

Back to the present, Surly is a brand of Quality Bicycle Products, and their Long-Haul Trucker (LHT) is available in many bike shops around the country. It is intended for riders looking for an affordable touring bike and retails for about \$ 1050. Yes, just a bit over a thousand dollars, making it one of the least expensive bikes we have tested. Add a set

Below: Only lights are missing to make a road-worthy touring bike. Tubus racks, fenders, pump, Brooks saddle and pedals not original equipment.

