

CYCLOPEDIA

Bike finder

Which bike should I buy?
Ask us at cyclinguk.org/bikefinder

On/off-road all-rounder

• **For:** John Jones, aged 74, from Swansea. • **Bike needs:** Leisure use, 50/50 on road and on bike trails, some fairly rough. I generally cycle about 100 miles a week. • **Must have:** Flat bar, 29in wheels, disc brakes. Not too heavy and suitably geared for hilly terrain on and off-road. Capable of being fitted with mudguards front and rear. **Must not have:** Drop handlebar. • **Budget:** £1,500.



Guy Kesteven

Given how many people do exactly the sort of riding you talk about, you'd think there'd be plenty of bikes that tick all your boxes. But a practical, light, rigid 29er with a flat bar is actually a very rare beast indeed.

Bikes with big 700C tyres (i.e. small 29er tyres) and drop bars are everywhere now but few come with a flat bar option. Cross-country mountain bikes with fast-rolling 29er wheels are also easy to find. They inevitably have a suspension fork, which adds weight, cost and reliability issues, won't have mudguard fittings and will be overkill for where you want to ride.

The **Sonder Frontier Deore Rigid (£949, alpkit.com)** is one of the rare rigid-forked mountain bikes available, and it's well below your budget. It uses a lightweight 6061 aluminium alloy frame with full mudguard mounts and plenty of space for them to fit around 29er tyres. The Rigid version comes with a fixed alloy fork featuring 'everything' mounts on the legs and those all-important mudguard mounts at the tips.

Shimano Deore gearing gives you plenty of winch potential if you head into the Welsh Valleys the hard way, while hydraulic disc brakes will keep you safe on any descents. As Sonder builds the bikes to order you can make adjustments to the specification to suit your style.

Alpkit offers a "28-day ride guarantee" so you've got a month to return the bike for a refund. But having tested several Sonder MTB and gravel bikes I'm confident you'll love it.

**SONDER
FRONTIER
DEORE RIGID**
£949



Dan Joyce

Gravel bikes are designed for the riding you describe and will handle "fairly rough" trails if the tyres are sufficiently wide. But most come with the drop handlebar that you don't want.

There are flat-bar gravel bikes in your price range, such as the **Genesis Croix de Fer 20 Flat Bar (£1,499.99, genesisbikes.co.uk)** and the **Marin DSX 2 (£1,185)**. I'd suggest instead a bike that isn't specifically described as a gravel bike: the **Giant ToughRoad SLR 2 (£1,099, giant-bicycles.com)**. It has wider tubeless tyres (50-622 or 29x2in), giving improved off-road comfort and capability.

At 11.5kg this carbon-fork, aluminium-frame bike is lighter than the steel Genesis, while its super-compact 2x10 transmission gives a good spread of road and off-road gears. It takes mudguards and pannier racks; the latter come fitted to the dearer **SLR 1** that I tested (cyclinguk.org/cycle-magazine/bike-test-do-it-all-bikes-genesis-vagabond-vs-giant-toughroad-slr1).

For road use an alternative – ideally narrower – hand position would be useful. Bar-ends set inboard might suffice. Better would be a multi-position bar such as a **Surly Moloko (£119.99)** or **On-One Geoff (£29.99)**. The ToughRoad's own-brand Giant tyres are fine but if you want more road speed, **Schwalbe's G-One Speed (@£61.99)** is available in 50-622.

If the ToughRoad isn't off-road capable enough for what you have in mind, you'll need a rigid mountain bike like the **Sonder Frontier** that Guy recommends.

**GIANT
TOUHRoad
SLR 2**
£1,099

