

# BIKE TEST



ROAD P57



TOURING P59



HYBRID/UTILITY P61



MOUNTAIN P62

EDITOR **DAN JOYCE** REVIEWS BIKES FOR CTC MEMBERS

## Your next bike

You told us what types of bike you're buying and how much you're spending. **Dan Joyce** suggests what to get at those prices

**YOUR NEXT BIKE** will probably be a road bike, tourer or hybrid, sold by an independent bike shop and costing a little over £1,000. That's what you told us in our online survey about CTC bike buying habits this summer.

We asked what type of bike you had bought in the last year or planned to buy in the next year, how much you had spent or planned to spend on it, and where you had bought or would buy it from. It's not an assessment of bike ownership within CTC but of your current bike buying habits.

We weren't greatly surprised to find that 0% of you are buying BMXs, but it was interesting to see road bikes poll higher (27.1%) than touring bikes (25.77%), hybrid/utility bikes (16.94%), and mountain bikes (8.54%). Folding bikes are as popular (6.92%) as we imagined, while a higher-than-expected one-in-25 of you are buying cyclo-cross bikes and just one-in-200 children's bikes.

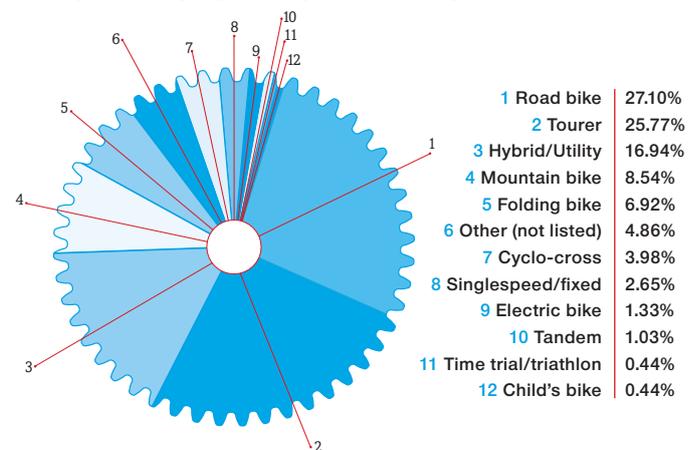
Your actual or expected purchase price for road, touring and mountain bikes clustered around £1,000 on average. Road bikes again polled highest (£1,165), above touring bikes (£1,060), and mountain bikes (£964). Those buying hybrid/utility bikes planned to spend less: an average of £589.

CTC members overwhelmingly (62%) buy bikes from independent bike shops, with 15% using chain stores such as Halfords and Evans, and 10% buying from online bike shops. Smaller numbers buy from CTC Shop, from bike-brand stores (e.g. Specialized concept stores), eBay, and mail order (using the phone).

We know what bikes you're buying and how much you're spending. But what are the best options in the four most popular categories: road, touring, hybrid, and mountain? I picked what I think are the best buys at your given price points, and tested them to see if they met my expectations. You won't necessarily agree with these choices (do post your suggestions on the CTC forum for the benefit of other members if you have different ones), but this should still provide some useful pointers.

### BIKE TYPE

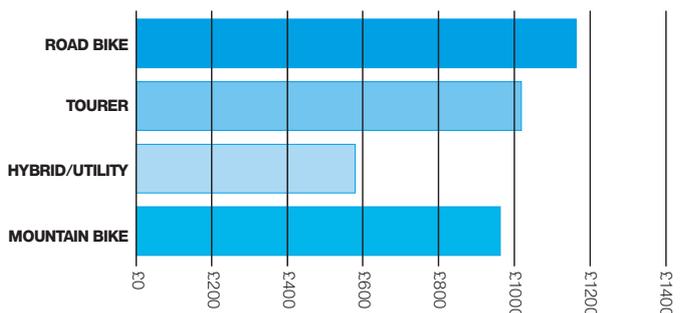
Survey completed by 670 members (1% of the membership). Bikes bought in the last year or that you plan to buy within the next year.



### AVERAGE SPEND

You mostly buy bikes from independent bike shops (62%). Just under 15% use chain stores like Halfords and 10% online shops. (Others use CTC shop, eBay, concept stores, etc.)

Road bike	£1,165.00
Tourer	£1,060.00
Hybrid/utility	£589.00
Mountain bike	£964.00



## ROAD BIKE

# Genesis Equilibrium 10

▶▶ **THE TYPICAL ROAD BIKE** at this price has an aluminium frame, 20-speed Shimano 105 gearing, short-drop brakes, and a focus that's more race than recreation. Yet road bikes are arguably more often bought for club riding, training, audax, sportives, or simply fun. The Genesis Equilibrium 10 is well suited to all of these uses.

It's designed in Britain for UK conditions. That means it comes with fittings for mudguards and room to fit them: the brakes have a 57mm drop and there's none of the toe-overlap that racers take for granted.

Thin frame tube diameters tell you that the Equilibrium is steel. It's Reynolds 725 chrome-moly, while the fork is carbon fibre. Even nice steel frames are a little heavier than aluminium ones, as well as a bit more expensive. At under 10kg, the Equilibrium 10 still feels light, and the cost-saving step to Tiagra isn't a big blow in gear shifting terms.

Tiagra is now 10-speed, like 105.



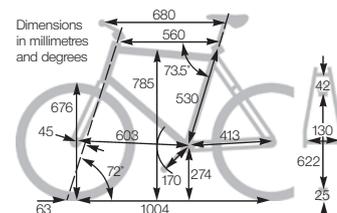
This year, Genesis have switched the 12-25 cassette for a 12-28, giving a usefully lower bottom gear (32in). I could winch up most hills sitting down. Since the chainset is a compact double, front shifts feel huge; the 16T jump requires one or two clicks up or down the cassette to maintain your cadence. That's no great hardship for a non-racer.

There is one problem with Tiagra. Unlike 105, the gear cables aren't routed under the bar tape. So you can't use a bar bag. That's a shame: it's the one piece of luggage, apart from a seatpack, that I wanted to fit. The dearer Equilibrium 20 (£1,300) does use 105.

The wheels are built more for reliability than racing, with 32-spokes, decent eyeleted rims and entry-level Shimano hubs. I'd upgrade the tyres: Conti's Grand Prix 4 Season offers a better balance of speed, grip and toughness. I'd stick with 25mm, which can be run slightly softer than 23mm (e.g. 6-7bar instead of 7-8bar) without risking pinch puncturing. They thus provide a plusher but still efficient ride.

Was there a hint of spring from that steel frame too? Perhaps. (The thin stays will move laterally a little, if not vertically.) Once I'd set the contact points where I wanted them – using a slightly shorter stem – the Equilibrium felt spot on. It would be a good choice for long rides, such as audax or sportive events, and yet it's still lively enough to mix it up in club run café sprints.

Wider range gearing, compact drops and an extra 8mm of air under the brake callipers help make the Equilibrium a better road bike for non-racers. (NB. SQR block not included.)



## GENESIS EQUILIBRIUM 10

**Price:** £1149.99 (frame only £279.99)

**Weight:** 9.45kg/20.8lb (no pedals)

**Size:** 56cm

**Sizes available:** 52, 54, 56, 58, 60cm

**Frame and fork:** Reynolds 725 double-butted chrome-moly with fittings for mudguard and 2 bottles. Carbon fork with aluminium steerer, fittings for mudguard

**Wheels:** 25-622 Continental Ultra Race tyres; Alex AT400 rims; 32 x 3 2.0mm spokes; Shimano 2200 hubs

**Transmission:** Shimano PD M505 pedals (not supplied on test bike), Shimano FC-4650 compact chainset, 170mm, 50/34T; Shimano external bearing bottom bracket; Shimano CN-4601 chain; Shimano CS 4600 12-28T 10-speed cassette. Shimano Tiagra shifters and derailleurs. 20-speed, 32-111 inches

**Braking:** Tektro BR359 dual-pivot sidepulls with 57mm drop; Shimano Tiagra STI levers

**Steering & seating:** 42cm Genesis 6061 shallow drop handlebar; 11cm x 7° Genesis 6061 alu' stem with 31.8mm clamp (swapped for 10cm stem in test); FSA Aheadset. Genesis Road saddle; 27.2mm Genesis 6061 aluminium seatpost

**Accessories:** none

**Contact:** genesisbikes.co.uk



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## Also consider

### 1) Specialized Secteur Elite £999.99

With Sram Apex wide-range gearing and a tall head tube, this would make an ideal sportive or recreational road bike – if you don't want mudguards. [specialized.com](http://specialized.com)

### 2) Spa Cycles Titanium Audax £1450

An extra £300 gets you this lovely titanium framed audax bike, which we reviewed in the Feb/Mar 2011 issue. [spacycles.co.uk](http://spacycles.co.uk)

## TOURING BIKE

# Surly Long Haul Trucker

▶ **THESE DAYS**, classic mid-range tourers like the Dawes Galaxy cost £1200. Surly's Long Haul Trucker (LHT) undercuts that, in part by arriving unequipped: no rack, no mudguards. Clearly you'll need to add these.

It's available with either 700C or 26in wheels. They're not interchangeable, as they have different brake boss positions and geometry – although both types and all sizes have the same offset for the fork.

Frame and fork are thick-walled chrome-moly steel, with a near-horizontal top tube that will appeal to traditionalists. The head tube is tall, extending above the top tube. That means you need less spacer-stacked steerer tube sticking out of the headset if you set your bars comfortably high.

It's long enough in the chain-stays and front centres to avoid heel clipped panniers and toe overlap respectively, even with the 175mm cranks fitted. I'd



rather have 170mm, for while the LHT's low bottom bracket makes it easy to get a foot down, it can also result in pedal strikes on rougher tracks. And the LHT is a robust tourer that will readily tackle such terrain. A chain-stay transfer reads: Fatties Fit Fine. Tyres, that is! There's just clearance for 50mm, even with mudguards.

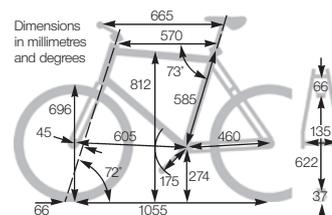
The drivetrain has an emphasis on durability. The bottom bracket is a good old UN53 square taper, while the shifters are bar-end levers rather than STIs. The front uses friction shifting, and the indexed rear can't too if you get gear troubles you can't fix. The trekking gear range is okay, although I seldom needed gears over 90in and would have liked a sub-20in gear if I'd had four panniers not two.

The wheels have reliable XT hubs and decent 36-hole rims, whose 18mm diameter will accommodate the fatter tyres that the frame allows. Those 37mm Conti Contacts rolled well on tarmac and bridleway alike.

The only immediate upgrade I'd make would be the brakes: long-arm cantilevers instead of these weedy Tektro Oryx units. The LHT needs good brakes not just because of the loads it can carry but because it's very stable when descending, so it's tempting to let it build up speed downhill. Being a long-wheelbase bike with 37mm tyres, it's comfortable too.

Overall, this is straightforward, sturdy steel tourer that's just as suitable for travelling on dirt tracks as tarmac.

It doesn't actually come with a rack, though it has fittings front and rear. Fatter tyres will fit too, making the LHT well suited to rough-stuff touring



## SURLY LONG HAUL TRUCKER

**Price:** £1050

**Weight:** 13.2kg/29lb (inc. pedals & rack)

**Size:** 56cm

**Sizes available:** 56, 58, 60, 62cm (700C); 42, 46, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62 (26in)

**Frame and fork:** 4130 chrome-moly steel, main triangle double butted, with fittings for rear carrier, mudguard, spare spokes, frame fit pump, 2 bottles. Chrome-moly fork, lugged and brazed, with fittings for low-load carrier and mudguard

**Wheels:** 37-622 Continental Contact tyres; Alex Adventurer rims; 36x3 2.0mm spokes; Shimano XT hubs

**Transmission:** no pedals; Andel RSC6 chainset, 175mm, 48/36/26T; Shimano UN53 square taper bottom bracket; Sram PC971 chain; Shimano Deore 11-34T 9-speed cassette. Shimano Dura Ace SL-BS77 9-speed bar end shifters; Shimano Tiagra triple front derailleur; Shimano XT rear derailleur. 27-speed, 21-120 inches

**Braking:** Tektro Oryx cantilevers with Tektro R200A levers

**Steering & seating:** 42cm PMT alu' handlebar; 90mmx17" Kalloy stem; Ritchey Logic Comp headset. WTB SST saddle; 27.2mm Kalloy SP-342 seatpost.

**Accessories:** two spare spokes

**Contact:** ison-distribution.com



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## Also consider

### 1) Dawes Galaxy £1199.99

Reynolds 631 tubing, 27-speed largely Deore gearing, and – like the LHT – bar end shifters. Includes Tubus rear rack and mudguards.

[dawescycles.com](http://dawescycles.com)

### 2) Ridgeback Voyage £799.99

Reynolds 520 frame, Shimano 2300 STI, 24-speed Alivio/Deore/Sora, rack, guards. Put the £260 saving towards a holiday!

[ridgeback.co.uk](http://ridgeback.co.uk)

## HYBRID/UTILITY

# Islabikes Beinn 29

FOR ANYONE who just wants 'a bike', a non-specialised, all-purpose hybrid is a good choice. This new offering from Islabikes is a true jack-of-all-trades option. It's like a Beinn kids' bike writ large.

Scaling up for adults means 700C wheels, called 29 not for marketing reasons but because the bike can be ordered with 29×2in mountain bike tyres. If you'll mostly stay on tarmac, you can specify touring tyres. If you're not sure, the default, lightly-treaded 38mm Kwik Trax tyres will do fine.

The frame shows how multi-purpose the Beinn 29 is. Clearances are good and there are fittings for racks and mudguards front and rear (shared). There are disc mounts and a front gear cable guide for upgrades. It even has sliding dropouts, for a hub gear or singlespeed conversion.

The frame is aluminium, with a reinforcing gusset where the head tube meets the down tube to



strengthen it here. The fork is rigid chrome-moly – a better and lighter option for any usage than a sub-standard suspension fork. A larger than normal offset (50mm) keeps the steering sharp and the front wheel further from your feet.

Gearing follows the keep-it-simple approach of the junior Islabikes: a single 32-tooth chainring drives an 8-speed cassette, gears shifted with an intuitive twistgrip. The range is fine, wanting only an 11-34 cassette instead of an 11-32 to make hills easier. I never lost the chain on the Beinn 29 but would add an N-Gear Jump Stop if I planned to ride it hard off-road.

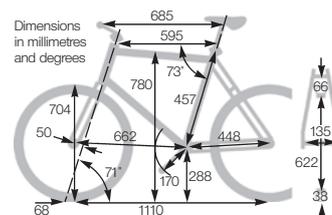
The 32-spoke wheels are decent quality, although the test bike's front was out of true when it arrived. That may have happened in transit; Beinn 29s are sold boxed, front wheel off.

Ten minutes with a spoke key fixed it.

The optional accessories (e.g. rack, guards, panniers) are all good, especially the Ortlieb Front Roller City panniers. I'd remove the rack's parcel spring to make these easier to attach.

The Beinn 29 is well-proportioned, with bar width and crank length matched to the small, medium and large sizes, and there's a good range of bar height adjustment. Its relatively low weight (for a budget hybrid) makes it rewarding to ride. If you – or a relative – wants one bike for commuting, touring, leisure riding, even mountain biking, the Beinn 29 is an excellent starting point.

Not a child's Islabike, but a big one slightly further away! It shares the versatility of the little Islabikes, and could be used for commuting, touring, or even mountain biking



## ISLABIKES BEINN 29

**Price:** £517.94 as tested (from £399.99)

**Weight:** 13.04kg/28.7lb (inc rack, mudguards, pedals)

**Size:** Medium (18in)

**Sizes available:** S (16in), M (18in), L (20in)

**Frame and fork:** 7005 T6 aluminium frame, with sliding dropouts, fittings for V and disc brakes, mudguard, rack, and 2 bottles. Chrome-moly fork with fittings for V and disc brakes, mudguard, rack

**Wheels:** 38-622 Kenda Kwik Trax tyres; DBM-1 double wall aluminium rims; 32 x 3 spokes; aluminium QR hubs

**Transmission:** Flat pedals; Truvativ 170mm cranks; 32T chainring with bashguard; square taper cartridge bottom bracket; KMC Z chain; Sram 11-32T 8-speed cassette. Sram X4 Gripshift; Sram X4 rear derailleur. 8-speed, 28-81in

**Braking:** Tektro V-brakes

**Steering & seating:** 640mm×31.8mm aluminium riser bar; 80mm×17" aluminium stem; 1 1/8in threadless headset. Unisex Islabikes saddle; 27.2×350mm aluminium seatpost

**Accessories:** chromo-plastic mudguards (£19.99); aluminium rear rack (£29.99); Ortlieb City panniers (£59.99); bottle cage (£4.99); bottle (£2.99)

**Contact:** [islabikes.co.uk](http://islabikes.co.uk), 01584 856881



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## Also consider

### 1) Trek Soho £600

Shimano Nexus 7 equipped city hybrid with roller brakes, mudguards and a partial chainguard. Also has fittings for racks.

[trekbikes.com](http://trekbikes.com)

### 2) Cannondale Bad Boy V26 £499.99

Cannondale's fat-tired street bike makes light of potholes and is more versatile than flat-bar road bikes. It takes mudguards too.

[cannondale.com](http://cannondale.com)

## MOUNTAIN BIKE

## Boardman HT Pro

▶▶ **AT ANY GIVEN PRICE**, a 26-inch wheel hardtail should have a better specification than a full suspension bike or a hardtail 29er. When that price is 'under £1,000', where one poor component choice can tip the balance on a bike's performance, there's a strong case for choosing an uncompromised, 26er hardtail – like this Boardman HT Pro.

The frame looks like carbon fibre but in fact it's hydroformed aluminium, with the welds smoothed over. It says 'cross country geometry' on the seat tube, yet while it is a lightweight, racy bike, it has a 120mm-travel fork and a slacker head angle than you'd expect. That yields a generous trail figure and gives the bike a trail-bike-like line-holding ability while descending. The high, wide bar emphasises this, and the HT Pro handles just fine on technical trail centre black routes.

It helps that it has an excellent fork for a £1,000 bike: a RockShox Reba RL. That's smooth and controlled, and



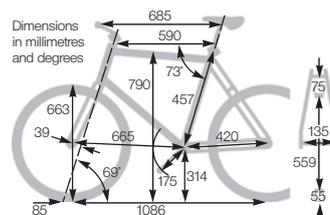
you can set the positive and negative air springs precisely to your weight and preference. Its tapered steerer means it has a bigger (1.5in) lower headset race, which should reduce steering flex and lengthen bearing life.

Manufacturers often have to 'rob Peter to pay Paul' when specifying their bikes. Not here. The drivetrain is the XT-equivalent Sram X9 throughout. More cable pull means it's more tolerant of grime and cable stretch than Shimano's gearing, although shifts never feel as crisp. A 27/40 double chainset is married to a 12-36 cassette. The range is ample, and the big step between chainrings isn't as pronounced as the roadie's compact double. It saves a little weight and it eliminates the sluggish downshift from middle to inner rings that you often suffer with triples on sudden climbs.

The BB30 bottom bracket gets rid of the bb cups and uses a thicker (30mm) axle. It should be lighter and stiffer, but I don't like the idea of press fit bearings any more than integrated headsets, which this bike also has. If longevity is an issue, replacements are readily available. The bottom bracket itself is a bit low, improving cornering stability at speed at the cost of more rock, rut or root strikes when pedalling.

Any shortcomings are minor, however. Given its low weight, high spec, and sure handling, the Boardman HT Pro is a steal at £1000. You could easily spend £200-£300 more on a bike of this quality.

Boardman bikes usually have a very good specification for the price. This HT Pro is no exception, having a Reba RL fork, Sram X9 gearing and Avid Elixir R brakes

**BOARDMAN HT PRO**

**Price:** £999.99

**Weight:** 11.35kg/24.97lb (no pedals)

**Size:** M

**Sizes available:** S, M, L

**Frame and fork:** Butted aluminium frame with tapered head tube, BB30 bottom bracket, fittings for two bottles, and twin eyelets on the dropouts. RockShox Reba RL fork with tapered steerer and 120mm travel

**Wheels:** 55-559 Continental Mountain King tyres; Mavic XM317 rims; 32 x3 spokes; Formula disc hubs

**Transmission:** Wellgo flat alloy pedals (not used); 175mm FSA Comet BB30 cranks; 40/27T chainrings; FSA BB30 bottom bracket; KMC X10 chain; Sram PG1050 12-36T 10-speed cassette. Sram X9 2x10 derailleurs and shifters. 20-speed, 20-87 inches

**Braking:** Avid Elixir R hydraulic disc

**Steering & seating:** 670mm Boardman aluminium low-rise handlebar; 90mmx6° Boardman Pro aluminium stem; FSA Integrated headset. Boardman saddle; 31.6x400mm Boardman carbon fibre seatpost

**Accessories:** none

**Contact:** boardmanbikes.com and local branches of Halfords



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**Also consider****1) On-One Scandal 29er SLX £899.99**

A light and efficient big-wheeled MTB with an SLX groupset and weight- and cost-saving rigid carbon fork. [on-one.co.uk](http://on-one.co.uk)

**2) KHS XC 604 £899.99**

Fair quality 130mm Manitou Minute air fork, lower weight, and SLX/XT components make this a cut above other budget full suspension bikes. [khs.co.uk](http://khs.co.uk)