



Ed normally rides around 50 miles a day. Not bad on a 36in gear!

### My Bike

## ED PRATT'S NIMBUS ORACLE 36"

Ed's not the only person cycling around the world right now, but he's the only one doing it on a unicycle. **Dan Joyce** caught up with him

**U**NICYCLES TEND TO get ridden on the street, off-road, and, yes, in the circus. They're seldom used for touring, where the small fixed gear and lack of luggage capacity weigh against them. Ed Pratt was undeterred. 'I'd been riding a unicycle for two years, gradually doing longer distances.

I wanted to do an adventurous trip after I finished my A-Levels. I settled on a world tour.'

He set off in March 2015, aged 19, riding a big-wheeled unicycle for a simple reason. 'Unicycles are fixed gear, so the bigger the wheel, the faster the riding speed. And 36" is the biggest-wheeled unicycle you can buy before you start taking apart penny farthings.'

That's still a small gear, but it isn't stopping him clocking up the miles. 'I try and hit 50 miles (80km) a day. It varies depending on the terrain and gradient. My longest day so far was on a Chinese highway, when I decided to see how far I could travel in 24 hours. I managed 200km on the smooth tarmac. In contrast, there are some days where the mountains are just too steep for my single gear or the surface is too bad and I have to walk.'

One downside of the unicycle is that he doesn't get to enjoy downhill. 'My preferred gradient is slightly uphill. This allows me to

stand on the pedals more, lifting my bum off the saddle and relieving saddle pressure. Slightly uphill is nicer if I happen to be travelling with a bicycle tourist too, because it removes the advantage of their freewheel.'

### SOLO TRAVELLING

His unicycle is a stock model from Nimbus that's been fitted with a bespoke rack designed and built by his grandad. 'It allows me to carry luggage, enabling me to ride solo and unsupported. As the tour has progressed, I've found myself needing to carry more food and water and warmer winter gear. Because of this, I've added a large front bag for food storage and a second one on the back to counter the weight. Also I found an orange toy dinosaur, which I've called Clarence, on the Kazakhstan steppe. He is now strapped to my mudguard support.'

Any cycle can be an ice-breaker in remote places. A unicycle attracts even more attention. 'I like to think it sends a message saying something like, "Hey, look at this guy. He's not from around here, but is definitely not a threat and is probably quite hungry!"'

He says his reception has been warmest in villages, and singles out Central Asia for hospitality. Sometimes, however, he's



The unique luggage rack was designed and built by Ed's grandad

attracted the wrong sort of attention. 'I had kids in Romania throw rocks at my head and a couple try to javelin sticks through my wheel. That wasn't too pleasant.'

Two years into his world tour, Ed shows no regret at his choice of transport, although he admits to being jealous of bicyclists for their ability to freewheel down hills. 'But no, apart from the saddle, which can be painful after long hours of riding, I feel my uni and the luggage I'm carrying are both pretty well optimised for touring.'

### SINGULAR BENEFITS

There are even advantages, Ed says, principally its portability. It's 28kg, fully loaded. 'I was travelling with British bicycle tourer Will Hodson recently. Getting to wild campsites was more of an ordeal for him. I could easily lift my uni over dry stone walls and other barriers. Will had to remove bags and transport his bike and luggage in multiple trips.'

Ed is travelling steadily and not backtracking, but isn't riding non-stop. He spent six months in Kyrgyzstan teaching English last winter. He's on the road again now – he was in Thailand when he and I caught up – and plans to complete his 18,000 mile journey some time in 2018.

Ed's website is [worldunicycletour.com](http://worldunicycletour.com)

### Ed's World Tour Unicycle

**MODEL:** Nimbus Oracle 36"

**FRAME:** Nimbus Oracle

**WHEEL:** Nimbus Stealth2 rim with Nimbus all-steel hub (after the aluminium alloy flange broke on the Kazakh steppe)

**GEARING:** nope

**BRAKE:** Shimano disc. Not sure of the model, but it's not crucial as I generally use my legs to control speed

**STEERING & SEATING:** no steering (well, I guess my bodyweight?) and KH Freeride saddle

**ACCESSORIES:** special, grandad-made luggage rack