



Bike test

RIDGEBACK RAMBLE

Editor **Dan Joyce** tests a gravel bike that suits urban roads better than unsurfaced ones

RIDGEBACK'S PARENT company Madison got in early on the gravel bike boom, launching the Genesis Croix de Fer (CdF) back in 2008. I was surprised to see a similar bike from the more utilitarian Ridgeback brand, especially as the entry-level CdF 10 is now £899. The Ramble sits in Ridgeback's 'World Series' range alongside traditional tourers. It's a nice-looking bike, but I think a bit more tourer in its DNA in the form of wider tyres and lower gears would give it a better ride and an identity distinct from the CdF.

The Ramble is a kilo lighter than the CdF 10, largely because its chrome-moly frame is equipped with a carbon-and-aluminium fork rather than a steel one. At 11kg, it still feels relatively heavy, falling midway between an

unequipped Surly Disc Trucker (12.2kg, Aug/Sep 15) and a Hallett 650 Adventure (10.2kg, April/May 17). While 11kg isn't heavy in absolute terms, 'lighter' and 'sportier' are two of a gravel bike's selling points over a tourer.

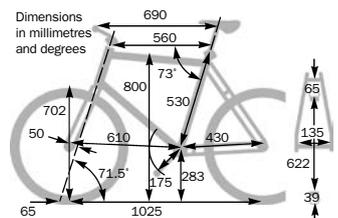
Another is readiness for those eponymous gravel roads, which people forget tourers will tackle too. On chippings-scattered forest fireroads, the Ramble lacked the comfort and traction of the road-plus bikes I tested last issue. It's not that its tyres are especially narrow; the nominal width of 33mm stretches to 39mm wide on what is effectively a 29er rim. I think it's the stretched profile making the tyres feel harder and less responsive over bumps. You'd get a smoother ride with genuinely wider tyres with a more bulbous profile (up to around 45mm will fit) or with tubeless tyres that could be run softer than the 60psi these specify.

The Ramble will tackle the back lanes exploring, lightly-loaded touring and gentle roughstuff its name implies. But away from tarmac you'll miss plusher tyres, and steep hills may see you reaching for lower gears than a 50-34 chainset and Sora shifters allow. It's essentially a tough road bike, one that might excel as a day-to-day commuter. (You could call it the Ridgeback Rumble...) If you want a bike like this that's more of an all-rounder, consider instead a Genesis CdF frameset (£399.99) equipped with your pick of components. **C**



Above: The tyres are nominally 33mm but stretch to 39mm wide on these 19mm-internal rims

Tech Specs



RIDGEBACK RAMBLE

PRICE: £999.99

SIZES: XS, S, M (tested), L, XL

WEIGHT: 11kg (no pedals)

FRAME & FORK: Chrome-moly steel frame with fittings for rack, mudguard, 3 bottles. Carbon fork with tapered alloy steerer and mudguard eyelets.

WHEELS: 33-622 Challenge Strada Bianca Comp tyres, Alex Draw 1.9S tubeless-ready rims, 32×3 14g steel spokes, Joytech D341/342 hubs

TRANSMISSION: Shimano Sora

FC-R3000 175mm 50-34t, Shimano

BB-RS500 b/b, KMC X9 chain,

Shimano CS-HG400 9-speed 11-34t

cassette. Shimano Sora R3000 shifters

and derailleurs. 18 ratios, 28-126in

BRAKING: TRP Spyre-C discs, 160mm

STEERING & SEATING: 420×31.8mm

Ridgeback alloy drops, 110mm×7°

Ridgeback AS-007 alloy stem, Prestine

PT-F17A tapered headset. Ridgeback

saddle, 27.2×350mm alloy seatpost

WEBSITE: ridgeback.co.uk

OTHER OPTIONS



1 Pinnacle Arkose 2 £1,000

Very similar in scope, but a kilo lighter (aluminium frame, carbon fork) and better equipped, with 10-speed Tiagra and RS405 hydraulic discs. evanscycles.com



2 Genesis Vagabond £899

Heavier but more off-road capable steel 'monstercrosser' with 29×2.10in tyres, bar-end shifters, and lower gears (40-28/11-36). Same brakes. genesisbikes.co.uk