

Trek 520

Trek's veteran steel tourer has been redesigned to reflect modern trends. **Dan Joyce** assesses it

he oldest model in Trek's line-up has had a makeover, gaining bigger clearances and bikepacking mounts, and swapping bar-end controls for brifters.

Not all of the changes are for the better. It's great that you can fit 29er mountain bike tyres up to about 2.2in wide, but the switch from a steel fork to an aluminium

one is strange. With the recommended 60-90psi in the 38mm Bontrager H1 front tyre, vibration from the UK's ubiquitous chipseal is tangible. The problem is compounded by a steep seat angle that tips your weight forward onto the hands.

The fork uses a ThruSkew axle, which



Above: Kudos to Trek for providing proper touring ratios. A 26-36-48 triple and 11-36 cassette = a 20in bottom repurposes a QR as a skinny screw-through. It's no stiffer but is more secure.

The frame has enough heel clearance for big panniers, and enough stiffness that they don't wag the bike when heavily loaded. While the front rack is capacious and good quality too, I'd rather have had a pair of mudguards. Gear shifting is okay, and

you can trim the front derailleur's position a little to avoid chain rub. While lots of riders will welcome the smaller steps of a triple, I'd have chosen an Alpine double (e.g. 40-26). Doubles work better and need no trimming.

The wheels are well built with 36

SURLY DISC TRUCKER £1,600 Robust steel tourer in two

Other options

versions: 26in or 700C. "Fatties [tyres] fit fine" on either. Capable but looking expensive now. ison-distribution.com



GENESIS VAGABOND £1,299

Versatile steel "monstercross" bike reviewed A/M 19. The 2020 model has 2×11 Sram brifter gears not bar-cons. genesisbikes.co.uk



Tech Spec TREK 520

• Price: £ 1,200 • Sizes: 48, 51, 54, 57, 60, 63cm (54 tested) • Weight: 13.87kg/30.5lb (no pedals) • Frame & fork:

Chrome-moly steel frame with fittings for mudduard. rack, three bottles, pump, kickstand. Aluminium allov fork with ThruSkew dropouts and fittings for mudguard, front rack, two bottle/ luggage cages. • Wheels: 38-622 Bontrager H1 Hardcase Ultimate tyres. 622x21 Bontrager Affinity Disc tubeless-ready rims, 36×3 14g stainless spokes, Shimano M475 disc hubs. • Transmission: 175mm Shimano

chain, Shimano HG200 11-36 9-speed cassette. Shimano Sora shifters, Shimano Sora front derailleur, Shimano Alivio long-cage rear derailleur. 27 ratios, 20-112 • Braking: Shimano

Sora levers, TRP Spyre C 2.0 mechanical disc brake callipers, 160mm rotors.

• Steering &

seating: Bontrager Gel Cork tape, 31.8×420 Bontrager Comp VR-C alloy handlebar, 100×7° Bontrager Elite Blendr-compatible stem, 11/8in threadless headset. Bontrager Evoke saddle, 27.2×330mm Bontrager alloy seatpost.

• Equipment:

Alivio T4060 cranks, B 48-36-26 chainrings, F Shimano SM-BB52 B external bottom D bracket, KMC X9 t

Bontrager Carry Forward front rack, Bontrager Backrack

Deluxe. trekbikes.com/gb

spokes apiece. Those Bontrager Hard Case tyres feel durable but a bit lifeless. A switch to more supple rubber would pay dividends on road. Yet I'd fit 50-622 Schwalbe G-One Bite tyres instead: the new 520 is arguably better as a roughstuffer than as an all-day mile-eater.

Verdict

Like Surly's Long Haul Trucker, Trek's 520 is a sturdy tourer with sensible gearing that'll take fatter tyres for dirt road or off-road adventures. This versatility adds value, though I'd want a longer lay-back seatpost to improve comfort.