UNLIKE MOST gravel or adventure bikes, the Bombtrack Beyond 1 has mountain bike tyres rather than narrower cyclocross ones – 29×2.1in on the test bike, 650B×2.1 on the smaller frame sizes. But I was still sceptical. Why would you want a drop bar and road-style controls off-road? Why would it be any better for adventure riding than a rigid mountain bike with plus-size tyres?

My first rides fed my doubts. With a rigid fork, a narrow bar (in off-road terms), and my weight forward, rutted, rooty and rocky terrain was a challenge, and my hands weren’t strong enough for the cable disc brakes when it was really steep. Then I stopped treating it like a mountain bike.

The merit of a bike like this is that it rides equally well on non-technical dirt and gravel tracks as on tarmac, swapping easily between the two. On the bone-dry 35-mile Downs Link, the Bombtrack lived up to its name and really bombed along. The chunky WTB Nano tyres felt grippy apart from, ironically, on the looser, more gravelly sections. The slightly flared handlebar made it easy to adjust my hands on the bike, so my back didn’t feel too stretched out, and the saddle was comfortable. It felt just as quick on the NCN tarmac route from Shoreham to Brighton.

The Beyond 1 is ready for bikepacking, with all the braze-ons you could need for attaching bags, bottle cages, and racks. Having ridden it fully-laden for the 100-mile on and off-road Dorset Gravel Dash, I can say that the handling isn’t much affected by a large load. It’s still fun to ride, once you get used to the drop-bar position.

I particularly like the understated blue-grey frame. It’s unobtrusive enough for urban use. This isn’t just an adventure bike: it will handle commuting and utility cycling as well, transitioning easily between bumpy roads, towpaths, and trails, and still carrying all your shopping home. It’s a go-anywhere, do-anything kind of bike with the notable exception of more technical mountain biking. I loved it!