Which bike should I buy?
Ask us at cyclinguk.org/bikefinder

Katy Hill, aged 43, from Cirencester. Bike needs: I'd like a bike that is as comfortable off-road as on lanes, and that can carry my tent, sleeping bag and supplies along King Alfred's Way. I'm planning also to explore the estate tracks and military roads of Scotland's highlands, wild camping. I'm only 5'3" and a bit. I'm used to mountain biking but want to go further and carry my tent and food. Must have: Bosses to fix a pannier rack. More than one bottle mount on my size (S?). 1× gears would be ideal. Hydraulic disc brakes. Light enough that I can lift it onto my car. Must not have: Electric gears. Rim brakes. Budget: £2,500

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Dan Joyce
A gravel bike with a drop bar is fine on rough roads and easier trails but a flat bar will be flat out better for control on any technical tracks you encounter in the Scottish Highlands. As a mountain biker, it's a setup you're used to. It's also much cheaper. The Sonder Camino AL Apex1 Flat (£869) saves over £500 over the AL GRX1. It should also fit you better as the flat bar, on the same frame, will reduce the effective reach.

Few other gravel bikes come with a flat bar option. A rigid mountain bike would be good but, as we've noted before, they've all but disappeared. So I'm going to go against cycle industry orthodoxy and suggest... a hybrid. Specifically, a hybrid with 650×47B (47-584) or wider tyres, such as the Whyte Victoria Commuter (£899, whyte.bike). The size S should fit perfectly, as it's meant for riders from 5'0" to 5'4". It comes with the spec and fittings you require, weighs only 10.8kg, and has off-road ready geometry. Replace the 40t chainring with a 32 or 34 to reduce the gearing, and the tyres with tubeless gravel ones like Continental Terra Trail in 47-584 (£39.95) or Schwalbe G-One Bite TLE in 50-584 (£62.99).

Consider fitting an On-One Geoff handlebar (£29.99) or Jones DB Loop H-Bar (£149) to give a range of hand positions; you'd then need a longer gear cable and brake hoses. A rack and panniers will be heavier than bikepacking bags but a Tubus Vega Classic rack (£100, 540g, clears a 60mm tyre) and Ortlieb Gravel-Pack panniers (£125, 1,160g/pair) won't be too weighty.