

Over to you Bikefinder

Which bike should I buy?

Ask us at cyclinguk.org/bikefinder

PRACTICAL UTILITY BIKE



← For: Nell Percival, age 43, from Glossop. **Bike needs:** A hybrid for practical journeys. Mine was stolen when I lived in Manchester, and I've now moved somewhere hilly.

Must have: Easy-to-use brakes and simple gears. Pannier space. Reliable, strong lights. Ability to carry a trombone, if possible. Maybe the ability to fold, but I want big wheels. **Must not have:** Drop handlebar. Fixed gear.

Budget: I have no idea what bikes cost. I'm basically a beginner.



Marin Kentfield 1
£499

MATT LAMY

Funnily enough, my first ever cycling article was a ride from Sheffield to Glossop, so I know the kind of terrain you're looking to explore – even if my expertise in carrying trombones is sadly lacking!

For all-round ease, my first suggestion is the £349.99 Riverside 500 hybrid from Decathlon (decathlon.co.uk). It has: a single chainring at the front, so only one gear lever to worry about; easily maintained mechanical disc brakes; a flat handlebar; and room for a rear rack. Your nearest Decathlon is in Stockport. You could buy a rack and lights there, too.

Most entry-level hybrids from big-name bike brands tend to have two or three rings at the chainset, complicating matters. But Marin has a few single-chainring bikes, such as the Kentfield 1 (£499, marinbikes.com), again with mechanical discs and room for a rear rack and mudguards. Marin also does a step-through version, the Kentfield 1 ST.

Specialized's Sirrus X range of bikes, starting with the 1.0 (£575, specialized.com), also comes in two frame shapes. The 1.0 features a simple 7-speed Shimano Altus drivetrain, alongside mechanical disc brakes. While a rack and mudguards can be fitted, these models feature Specialized's 'Plug+Play' mountings, which might limit your options.

Finally, you mention folding bikes. An entry-level option is the Carrera Intercity Folding Bike from Halfords (£400, halfords.com), which comes with a rear rack fitted, an 8-speed drivetrain and a sub-14kg carry-on weight. It does have only 20in wheels, though. If you want a bigger-wheeled folder, the budget will have to be bigger, too – to the tune of £1,100 in the case of Tern's 24in-wheeled Node D8 (ternbicycles.com/uk).

DAN JOYCE

The hard thing here is knowing just how much you're happy to spend. There's a huge difference between what's available for £300 and what you can get for, say, £1,000. But before getting into that, let's look at your most unusual requirement: carrying a trombone.

An online search tells me that a trombone case measures around 90–95×30–35×20–30cm. While you might squeeze that into a large rear pannier, poking out the top and secured to the rack with a bungee or two, there's a better option: the Mundo AirPannier (£38.50, mundomusicgear.co.uk/products/airpannier), which is specifically designed for carrying bulky musical instruments.

As for the bike, the only one I can think of that ticks all your boxes is the Tern Node D8 that Matt mentions. I tested one for the Aug/Sep 2021 issue of *Cycle* and liked it; the review is online (cyclinguk.org/less-famous-folders). With 24in wheels and fat tyres, it rides like a conventional bike. Yet it will just about fit a train luggage rack when folded. All you would have to add is battery lighting, which we tested last issue. See cyclinguk.org/commuter-bike-lights.

If the Node D8 is too expensive, you'll need to forgo the folding aspect and buy a hybrid. You can take non-folding bikes on trains (see cyclinguk.org/bike-car-train), although it can be a frustrating experience. Conventional bikes can be transported by cars with a large enough boot space or a bike rack; tow-bar fitting racks are the easiest to use.

The best-value non-folding bike that meets your brief is the Elops Long-Distance Step-Through City Bike 500 (decathlon.co.uk). It comes with intuitive 1×9 gearing, mudguards, a rear rack, a kickstand and hub-dynamo-powered lighting. Normally £499.99, it was discounted by £50 at time of writing.



Tern Node D8
£1,100