



Left: The tall stack of spacers is because Simon's on a bike one size smaller than usual
Below: Like the Spa, it's a Far East frame designed and equipped in the UK



discomfort and numbness setting in.

There are 'in-between' handlebar options: the butterfly bars used by many European cycle tourists, and the alternative flat bars we featured in the June/July 24 issue (cyclinguk.org/alt-bars). These increase the number of handholds while retaining a more upright riding position and enabling the use of more cost-effective flat-bar controls. Although the Oxford has a simple flat bar, it can be specified with grips with integral bar ends, giving a useful extra hand position. I'd choose these if I were buying the bike.

Components

The Oxford Bike Works Model 1 has a triple chainset. While rare these days, it's still the go-to for many of us, offering both a wide gear range – including a bottom gear of just 18in – and small jumps between gears. It's arguably the best of both worlds when it comes to range and cadence.

The drivetrain is 3x10-speed Shimano Deore. Deore has been doing sterling work for generations of mountain bikers, day-to-day cyclists and cycle tourists since the 1980s. Shimano flags it as only mid-range kit, but in my experience Deore is durable and well designed.

“A TRIPLE CHAINSET IS ARGUABLY THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS WHEN IT COMES TO RANGE AND CADENCE”

The trigger shifters work impeccably and the braking is very good.

It's been quite a while since I've used V-brakes. I'd forgotten just how effective they are. They offer plenty of power and control, and a pretty light action. They don't need bedding in either. Compared to the cantilevers that preceded them, they're

a noticeable step up. With flat-bar levers they don't require a Travel Agent or similar gizmo to achieve the correct cable pull. And V-brake spares remain readily available.

The Spa D'Tour has a more modern road- and gravel-based setup: 11-speed Shimano 105 with a GRX rear mech. You can choose from a number of chainsets. I picked a sub-sub-compact 40-24 double. Paired with an 11-40 cassette, that gives an ultra-low bottom gear of just 16in. This was a godsend for my 63-year-old knees.

The Spa's brakes are TRP Spyre cable discs, which are a decent choice for touring. They may

Tech spec

Oxford Bike Works Model 1

Price: £1,699.

Sizes: 51 (tested), 54, 57cm.

Weight: 14kg (as shown).

Frame & fork: Reynolds 525 steel frame with three pairs of bottle bosses, mudguard and rear rack fittings. Steel fork with low-rider bosses and mudguard mounts.

Wheels: 35–622 Schwalbe Road Cruiser Plus, Mavic A319 rims, Shimano Deore T610 hubs, 36 straight-gauge spokes.

Transmission: Flat pedals with pins, 170mm Shimano FC-M371 chainset with 44–32–22 chainrings, Sunrace 68x122.5mm bottom bracket, KMC X10 chain, Shimano HG500 11–34 cassette. Shimano T6000 Deore shifters and derailleurs. 30 ratios, 18–109in.

Braking: Shimano T611 levers and T4000 Deore V-brakes.

Steering & seating: Ergotec handlebar grips, 61cm bar, 110mm stem, M-Part Comp headset. Cinelli 27.2mm seatpost, Bioflex 75/00 saddle.

Equipment: Flinger F50 mudguards, Topeak Supertourist rear rack, Tortec bottle cage.

oxfordbikeworks.co.uk

Dimensions in millimetres and degrees

