



Q&A

Your technical, health and legal queries answered by Cycle's experts



Photo: schwalbe.com

Q I've been reading about the new trend of 32-inch wheels for mountain and gravel bikes. While this may offer advantages if you're 6ft 3in and above, is this just another cynical ploy to re-stimulate the market by introducing yet another standard for the mass market?

Ferrij, on the Cycling UK Forum

A great subject for an in-depth article – but, in essence, tyre (and wheel) size, whether on road or off, is a trade-off between various factors including weight, ease

of rolling and structural integrity. Larger diameter wheels roll more easily over obstacles and their weight carries more inertia through obstacles, which is basically why gravel and MTB wheels are getting progressively bigger.

On the other hand, they add to the overall weight of the machine and are, assuming comparable components and construction, weaker and less rigid than smaller wheels. It is, of course, harder to accommodate larger wheels on a small frame without running into issues with geometry. The advantages are clear for off-road riding. Whether they outweigh the drawbacks is a decision for the bike designer – or buyer.

Richard Hallett

Q I have 700×28C Panaracer GravelKings on my Condor Fratello. They're a close fit under the mudguards. I want to fit Schwalbe Green Marathons in this size. Will they fit? Are all 28mm tyres the same height? **Garry Booth, on the Cycling UK Forum**

All 28mm tyres are not the same height – or width for that matter, even fitted to the same rim. A 1mm or so variation is possible. Tread thickness adds a further variable to its height. A heavily treaded 'wide' 28mm tyre will be significantly taller than a slim, lightweight tyre such as a slick GravelKing.

Given that 25mm tyres offer acceptable road performance in most circumstances and are lighter than 28mm, sticking to the former would appear a good choice if you are set on fitting the Schwalbes.

Richard Hallett

Q A friend of mine is keen to dimple their seatstays in order to fit a larger tyre. Is this a bad idea? **BerlinMatt, on the Cycling UK Forum**

Indenting or dimpling steel chainstays to increase clearance for a tyre or chainring is common practice.

It's unusual to dimple seatstays. If small indents – say, 3mm or so each side – would be enough and they are done correctly, there should be no more of a problem than with dimpling chainstays. Much more in a 16mm seatstay would mean substantial tube wall deformation, with the risk of work hardening and consequent cracking.

Richard Hallett