



Biketest

Bristol Bicycles Randonneur

Many touring bikes are closer to £2,000 than £1,000 these days. **Simon Withers** tests one that isn't

Bristol Bicycles produces understated aluminium bikes at sensible prices. The Randonneur is the company's most expensive non-electric bike. I upped the price by choosing mudguards, a rack, a flared handlebar, and eight-speed Shimano STI rather than bar-end shifters. (In addition to a degree of customisation, Bristol Bicycles offers bookable test rides and a lifetime frame and fork warranty.)

The 6061 aluminium frame may be straightforward – round tubes, no hydroforming, threaded bottom bracket, external cabling – but it's tough, practical, and comprehensively equipped with bottle

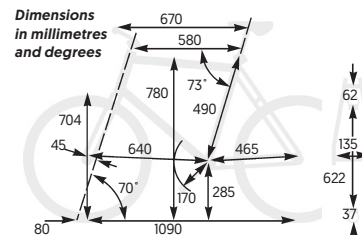


Above: A triple chainset makes it easy to ride at a consistent cadence. Smaller rings would be nice on tour

bosses. The Randonneur's steel fork has fittings for bikepacking bags too. Dropouts are quick release rather than thru-axle but I didn't get any rotor rub. While the Sora disc brakes are 'only' mechanical and lack the bite of hydraulics, they were smooth and silent.

The Shimano drivetrain and shifters were very good. And while triple chainsets

are getting scarce, nothing matches a triple for letting you ride at a consistent cadence. I'd go for a lower bottom gear than the Randonneur's 24in (28/32) for expedition riding, although on my local climbs I was able to spin comfortably. Handbuilt wheels and a disc brake-specific rear rack round out a well-considered package.



Tech Spec BRISTOL BICYCLES RANDONNEUR

- **Price:** £1,262 as tested (from £1,070)
- **Sizes:** 17in, 19in (tested), 21in, 23in
- **Weight:** 13.9kg
- **Frame and fork:** 6061 aluminium frame with fittings for rear rack, mudguard, kickstand, 2x double and 1x triple cage mount. Steel fork with multiple mounting points.
- **Wheels:** 38-622 Panaracer Pasela ProTite tyres, 36h Zac 2000 rims, 36x2mm pg spokes, Shimano TX505 front hub, Tourney TX505 rear.
- **Transmission:** 170mm Shimano Tourney TX801 triple chainset, 28-38-48t rings, Shimano BB ES300, Shimano HG40 8-speed chain, Shimano HG41 11-32 cassette. Shimano Claris STI shifters, Shimano Claris front derailleur, Altus rear. Eight ratios, 24-119in.
- **Braking:** Shimano ST-R2030 levers, Shimano Sora R317 cable disc brakes.
- **Steering & seating:** 44cm Controltech CLS Gravel bar, 80mm stem, Neco threadless headset, Madison Flux saddle, 27.2mm seatpost.
- **Equipment:** Stronglight 48mm mudguards, Tortec Transalp Disc rack.

bristolbicycles.co.uk

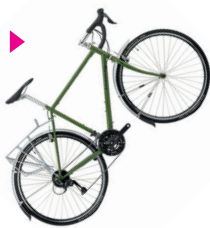
Aluminium tourers may still be in the minority but the Randonneur will be a little lighter than a steel equivalent. With 38mm tyres it's easily comfortable enough on poor surfaces, tackles kerbs and potholes with aplomb, and is surefooted on loose grit and dry towpaths without feeling too sluggish on smooth tarmac. It carries loads comfortably, the slack head angle and stretched-out wheelbase keep the handling stable, and the wide gravel bar – flaring out to 50cm on the drops – helps on more challenging surfaces, making the Randonneur suitably versatile too. ●

Other options

RIDGEBACK VOYAGE £1,349.99

Ridgeback's budget-ish tourer has a steel frame and fork, a rear rack, and a triple chainset with a 26x34 bottom gear.

ridgeback.co.uk



SPA CYCLES WAYFARER £1,250+

Reynolds 725 frame, a Sora/Alivio drivetrain (48-38-28 chainset), and handbuilt wheels make for a good looking tourer.

spacycles.co.uk



Verdict

Light enough and tough enough for commuting, kitted out for full-on touring, and with bikepacking capabilities and loads of tyre clearance, Bristol's Randonneur lives up to its name well. The aluminium frame keeps the price down and doesn't compromise the quality of the ride.