

First look

A wide-tyred trekking bike with everything you need for commuting or touring



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Trekking bikes

Curly bars aren't the only way to tour. **Simon Withers** tests two keener-priced, flat-bar alternatives from Cube and Trek

Even in these inflationary times there's a way to buy a brand new, fully equipped tourer for under a grand: choose one with a flat handlebar. Euro-style trekking bikes come with all the components you need for touring or commuting, including a rear rack, mudguards and lights, yet cost hundreds of pounds less than a drop-bar equivalent.

Both the Cube Travel and Trek Dual Sport 2 Equipped Gen 5 look to be great-value bikes. They're suitable for long-distance touring straight from the shop. Additionally, their tough wheels and wide tyres make them ideal for commuting on our perpetually potholed roads and for leisure rides over a variety of surfaces, whether that's the light gravel of some Sustrans routes or unsurfaced towpaths. Both bikes are fairly hefty, at around 15kg, so you won't be speeding to your destination, but they're commensurately strong: the Trek has a 136kg limit for the bike, rider and luggage combined, while the Cube's limit is 145kg.

A lower price isn't the only advantage of a flat bar over drops. Gears often go lower and brakes are typically better. Hydraulic discs only feature in manufacturers' higher-end road groupsets, yet even Shimano's lower-level off-road groupsets – as fitted to the two test bikes – include such brakes. Both bikes are

available with step-through frames, too. Few drop-bar tourers come in this format.

Frame and fork

It's an all-aluminium affair when it comes to both bikes' frames and forks, and both also come with a pleasingly comprehensive range of fixtures and fittings. If you were being hyper-critical, you might want top tube 'bento box' fittings or bottle bosses under the down tube, but those are the only absences. Both forks do have bosses for low-rider racks, however. The Cube Travel has front and rear quick-release axles, with Trek using its own ThruSkew fork axle, a halfway house between a quick release and thru-axle. Even without thru-axles, there was no issue with the quality of braking on either bike.

Both bikes also have similar frame angles, with relaxed head tubes and steeper seat tubes. The angular-looking Cube's geometry is noticeably more stretched out, with a much longer wheelbase, top tube and front centres measurement, which makes for great