

£1250 TRADITIONAL TOURERS

## BIKE TEST



RIDGEBACK WORLD PANORAMA

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# Beyond the Galaxy

Technical Editor **Chris Juden** reviews UK touring bikes: Ridgeback's World Panorama and Claud Butler's Dalesman, both rivals to a better-known name from Dawes

► **REVIEW A** drop-handlebar touring bike and the question will come: how does that compare with a Galaxy? Unfortunately, Dawes didn't have a spare Galaxy Classic, the model that Ridgeback's World Panorama and Claud Butler's Dalesman are priced to compete with. But the elephant in this room will not be ignored. Let's call it DGC.

Tourists seldom go down on the drops, so why do so many want those curly bars? For comfort: it's easier on your wrists when they're oriented as you steer a car, with hands at quarter to three (or ten to two), and the brakes should also be at your fingertips. Hands on the hoods ticks both boxes, and drops offer two or three alternative

Touring bikes combine a drop handlebar with wide-range gearing, which means mix-and-matching from road and MTB components

positions, for a change – which is as good as a rest – or when a headwind forces you to adopt the racer's crouch. And it cannot be denied: there is some appeal in looking a bit like a racer!

According to cycle parts manufacturers, however, bikes for travel and transport should have flat handlebars (some of which do have a 'quarter to three' hands position – but not with fingers on brakes).

The idea that a drop bar might be handy on such a bike is hardly acknowledged and can be realised only by combining parts from different component groups, designed for sport rather than transport. But road and off-road cycle sports have evolved along separate lines these past 20 years, and

the gaps are showing in today's touring bikes.

## Frames

We tested the middling-to-big size in both models, which should fit the same sized rider, but they vary considerably in geometry, from each other and a DGC. You'll get the saddle into the same position relative to the pedals on any of these bikes, but not the handlebar. A few years ago, Dawes recognised that many tourists wanted their hands higher than the saddle and lengthened Galaxy head tubes accordingly. Ridgeback's Panorama geometry is more like Galaxy used to be, with the bar about 3cm lower than a same size DGC. Many years of





low handlebars have taken their toll and I now need them level with the saddle, which at maximum height the Panorama bar was, though being short in the body I could do with a shorter stem. The Dalesman is another 5cm lower in front, with only one spacer under the stem, leaving little scope for adjustment. And the Dalesman frame is long, compensated by a short stem, which could be a problem if like me you'd want an even shorter one. This illustrates the importance of a test ride before you buy, since handlebar position is personal and almost impossible to determine except by trial and error.

These bikes also have radically different steering geometry. The Panorama's long trail combines with the shallow angle to produce floppy steering at low speed. Steep climbs with front panniers will be a handful, but nothing one cannot get used to. The Dalesman was completely different: very short trail but nonetheless stable – better touring geometry in my opinion.

Reynolds 725 may be considered a slightly superior material to 631 and I also think the Panorama's big round

**1** Mind the gap, betwixt crank and everything else!

**2** Seatstay pump peg, a retro detail

**3** Bar-top levers. Also note a subtle backward bend of the bar

**4** Shimano CX50 cantilever. Requires more slack to release than is readily available

down-tube makes better structural sense than the Dalesman's possibly aerodynamic oval.

Both bikes have the usual touring braze-ons, plus one extra each. The Panorama gets a seatstay pump peg (with pump) and the Dalesman boasts three spare spokes on the chainstay. But should they not be on the right, to protect chainstay paint from the chain? I prefer the look and the longer head-tube that goes with (or should have) the Dalesman's shallow fork crown, but I don't like low-rider bosses brazed on the front of the blades. Through the middle, as on the Panorama's fork, is a stronger and safer fitting.

## Wheels

Both bikes would look and ride better on 32mm tyres if they had 17mm rims rather than 19mm. These rims are optimum for the wider 37mm tyres that give better rough-stuff capability and will fit the frames of these bikes, but too wide for the 28mm rubber that tarmac-only riders like to tour and commute on. There's a full complement of 36 spokes, including in front where so many is not needed, but I'd like to

## Also consider



### 1) Dawes Galaxy Classic £1300

For £50 more, you get more gears but not so low, shifted at the bar-end instead of STI, with the same cantilever brakes, over-wide rims and ugly-wide trekking chainset. [dawescycles.com](http://dawescycles.com)



### 2) Hewitt Cheviot £1299

A slightly better-designed touring bike, in my opinion, from this Lancashire firm, with well-built wheels. [hewittcycles.co.uk](http://hewittcycles.co.uk)



### 3) Aravis Expedition £1105

Something very similar to a Hewitt Cheviot, but with cheaper components, can be had from Byercycles in Beds. [byercycles.co.uk](http://byercycles.co.uk)



### 4) Spa Titanium £1580

Spend a bit more for a lighter frame, better wheels and nicer chainset, from Spa Cycles. [spacycles.co.uk](http://spacycles.co.uk)







CLAUD BUTLER DALESMAN



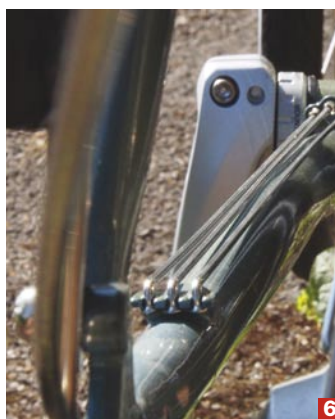
5 see thicker ones in back on the right, where tension is higher due to dishing.

### Gears

A touring bike's transmission is where the gaps between road and mountain become almost unbridgeable, now both have gone 10-speed (or more!). That's why these expensive tourers come with cheap Sora parts, although Claud Butler have found some older 9-speed Tiagra. And since concealed gear cables are a treat reserved for those who go decimal, both these

5 This pedal reflector will self-destruct in five seconds!

6 Spare spokes: would be better on the right



bikes have 'washing lines' in the way of a handlebar bag. You can nevertheless fit one between them, but it'll rub until the bag leaks and the gear casings fail, as I know to my cost!

The DGC is 10-speed with road mechs – and the penalty is a not-so-low bottom gear. The two tourers on test sensibly stick at nine and fit mountain/trekking rear mechs that can handle 34-tooth rear sprockets, although a mere 32 is fitted. But with STI levers, the front mech must be road, so the chainset

has to compromise between correspondingly big roadie outer rings and the smaller inner that is wanted for winching a load up steep hills. The usual compromise is a 'trekking' chainset: an MTB crankset with somewhat bigger rings. Unfortunately these chainsets have an awfully wide pedal track, being designed for tyres hugely fatter than anyone wants on a tourer. So you'll pedal like a duck, with a 'Quack-factor' exceeding 180mm – all the worse to flex the bottom-bracket!

The gears functioned adequately, though the middle chainrings being so far from the frame didn't drive the bottom sprockets as smoothly as I'd like. Much neater chainsets, with closer chainline, are available – you'll see them on tourers from smaller manufacturers. But I was glad to see a square-taper axle unit on the Panorama: they tend to last longer than external bearings.

### Brakes

Both bikes have low-profile cantilever brakes. To release them, to get the wheel out (or in), it should





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be easy to detach the straddle cable from one brake arm. It isn't easy, but possible at least, to release the Tektro Oryx brake on the Dalesman. The Panorama's (and DGC's) Shimano CX50 brake needs to be adjusted more loosely before it can be released; too loosely, in my opinion, to provide safe braking. This is surprising, given that this brake is mainly intended for the sport of cyclo-cross where you'd think a quick wheel change might be wanted.

Although I'm no fan of low-profile cantilevers (which need to be adjusted rather close to the rim to ensure the bike will stop in demanding conditions before the lever bottoms against the handlebar), both systems functioned satisfactorily – apart from the Shimano brakes' release problem.

The Panorama boasts additional bar-top levers, which is nice, but their rather short adjusters are all you get for this job. It's barely enough to enable releasing the brakes.

## Equipment

Both bikes come with mudguards, of course, and at first glance good ones, but the Panorama's are a shade narrow for 32mm tyres (far too narrow for the 37mm tyres that would fit its frame and rims) and the Dalesman does not have any safety-release on the front – without which I wouldn't ride this bike very far!

You get a rear carrier too, and I was pleased to see that both were rearlamp-ready. That's all from Claud, but Ridgeback also give you three bottle cages and a pump.

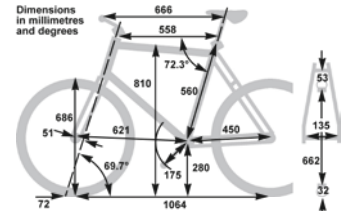
I almost forgot the pedals. Some manufacturers forget them entirely, dodging a legal obligation to provide reflectors – which you need to ride a bike at night. The Panorama comes well equipped, with a combined reflector and tread surface accessory clipped into one side of its double-sided SPDs. The pedals on the Dalesman are a token offer. The integral, non-adjustable toe-clips are too short even for my small feet and reflectors protrude vulnerably from the pedals' undersides. Gravity turns a pedal over. I couldn't even get started without briefly treading the 'wrong' side of the left pedal, squashing the ill-conceived accessory, which spat its twinkling yellow contents into the gutter!

## Conclusion

Although none of these bikes (including DGC) impresses me greatly, any of them will do, with the Panorama slightly ahead on points. The choice really comes down to where you want your handlebar: Galaxy for higher than the saddle, Panorama for about the same height, or a Dalesman for the nose-down brigade!

7 A traditional fork crown saves space

## Tech specs



### RIDGEBACK WORLD PANORAMA

**Price:** £1250

**Weight:** 13.90kg

**Sizes [tested]:** 47, 50, 52, 54, [56], 58, 60cm

#### Frame & fork:

Reynolds 725 frame, fittings for 3 bottles and pump, CroMo fork

**Wheels:** Continental Contact 32-622 tyres, Alex 19mm rims, 36×3 2.0mm stainless spokes on Deore hubs

**Transmission:** 27-speed, 22–118in. Shimano SPD pedals, Alivio 26-36-48 chainset, 11-32 cassette, XT

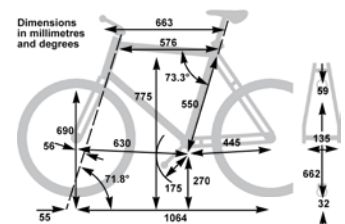
rear & Sora front mechs shifted by Sora STI

**Braking:** Shimano CX50 cantilevers, by STI plus Tektro top levers.

**Steering & seating:** 42cm dropped bar, 110mm stem, VP threadless headset. Ridgeback Tour saddle

**Equipment:** SKS 35mm Chromoplastic mudguards, rear alloy carrier, 3 bottle cages, Giyo pump

**Contact:** ridgeback.co.uk



### CLAUD BUTLER DALESMAN

**Price:** £1250

**Weight:** 13.68kg

**Sizes [tested]:** 49, 52, [55], 59cm

#### Frame & fork:

Reynolds 631 main tubes, CroMo stays, fittings for 3 bottles & spare spokes. Reynolds 520 fork

**Wheels:** Schwalbe Marathon 32-622 tyres, WTB 19mm rims, 36×3 2.0mm stainless spokes on Deore hubs

**Transmission:** 27-speed, 22–118in. VP-398T pedals, Shimano Deore

26-36-48 chainset, 11-32 cassette, Deore rear & Sora front mechs shifted by Tiagra STI

**Braking:** Tektro Oryx cantilevers, by STI levers

**Steering & seating:** 44cm dropped handlebar, 90mm stem, threadless headset. Velo Tour saddle

**Equipment:** 45mm chromoplastic mudguards, rear alloy carrier

**Contact:** claudbutler.co.uk