

£1000-£1600 TREKKING BIKES

## BIKE TEST



CUBE DELHI RF

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# Dispensing with drops

Flat-handlebar trekking bikes are a viable alternative to traditional drop-bar tourers. Technical Editor **Chris Juden** reviews two, from Cube and Rose

▶ **IT'S BEEN** three years since we reviewed a trio of trekking bikes. I introduced them as the default answer when someone asks you what sort of bike to buy. Rather than repeat myself, here's the article: [tinyurl.com/lutfyeq](http://tinyurl.com/lutfyeq).

Trekking sounds like touring and so it is: German-style, with flat handlebars. Where anyone and everyone rides, bikes sell on their practical merits rather than sporting pretensions. The demands of travel and transport being practically identical, folk simply take their everyday bike on holiday. Our Anglo-French drops have pros, such as the parallel 'on the hoods' handgrip, but also cons: principally mixing road shifters with mountain bike derailleurs. Transverse handgrips may not be quite

*A trekking bike is lighter and has a better range of gears than a city bike, goes easier on roads than a mountain bike, is more comfortable and practical than a road bike, and is better value than a bare hybrid*

as ergonomic but they'll do okay.

Lightweight trekking bikes were a rarity in Britain until recently. But now some Dutch and German brands have been expanding their marketplace, making higher-quality, lightweight models available here. We've picked two top-of-the-range trekkers for comparison with the drop-bar tourers I reviewed last issue. Most trekking bikes have a suspension fork, but tourers don't and it adds over a kilo, so we picked two with rigid forks.

## Travel and transport

Cube is young German brand that now has a network of dealers throughout the UK. They major in mountain and road racing bikes of course, but some

also stock the Delhi RF. There are several Cube Delhi versions and 'RF' means rigid fork, saving 1.8kg on the basic Delhi and 1.5kg on the Delhi Pro. All these models also come in 'Lady' versions, with a low enough top tube to interest those of either sex who have difficulty 'cocking a leg over'.

The Delhi RF is a rugged bike, marketed as ready for the trip to India, but it's no heavier than traditional touring bikes at the same price (after allowing for the parts they come without). Those who commute on pared-down road or mountain bikes may question the use of full-on touring equipment for less demanding rides. I would say that the attributes that make a bike good for the long haul also





ROSE MULTISTREET 3



enable it to go a shorter daily distance all year round, year after year. Isn't that exactly what you want? As for carrying expedition loads: what about shopping expeditions? And all that stuff you sometimes need for work?

Our other bike comes from Rose, a business that grew since 1903 from the smallest bike shop in Bocholt in Germany to become, by 1994, a huge mail-order bike parts supplier with a catalogue rated by Yoshi Shimano the best in Europe. That year they launched their own brand of MTBs and now also manufacture road and trekking bikes. Although Rose now have the biggest most beautiful bike shop in Bocholt, if not Europe, most business remains by mail, or rather the internet.

Now that Rosebikes sell into Britain via a co.uk website and publish their catalogue in English, their Multistreet 3 is probably the lightest trekking bike you can easily buy here. Costing two-thirds more than the Delhi, it's not a direct competitor, but indicates what those with deeper pockets might get. As indicated by 'street' in the name, the specification of this bike slants toward tarmac and the geometry is more

sporty, but the only missing part of the trekking package is a chainguard. It's similar to the Cannondale Tesoro I bought after its 2010 review.

### No steel

Rather than the traditional tourer's steel, both these bikes have aluminium frames. That's difficult to repair, but how often do you read of anyone getting their bike welded on tour? The Delhi's fork is also aluminium, thick and stiff enough not to fatigue, and the Multistreet's carbon fork also has to be pretty stiff to hold a disk brake calliper. But comfort comes mainly from tyres and neither bike has narrow ones, so aluminium frames don't bother me on that score either.

The Multistreet's frame is particularly thin-wall 6013 alloy, 25% stronger than the usual 6061 and with better fatigue resistance. So maybe Rose have designed this frame to flex a bit? It's also possible the carbon fork absorbs some road shock, but I'd be lying if I said I could tell.

One snag with very light frames in any material is vulnerability to incidental damage, and the

1 Cube's botched carrier fixing

2 Rose's spaced-out carrier fixing







➤ Multistreet came with a couple of small dents already. They're not too obvious and wouldn't worry me. Bikes are for riding not admiring and this light trekker is a joy to ride. It rewards effort, especially uphill, which made my one-hour commute a few minutes shorter. Add 2kg and you wouldn't expect a bike to be as nimble, but neither is the Delhi RF slow. I rate it a pleasure to ride, and got to work in the usual time.

While the Delhi's tyres are wide, they are not sluggish. Marathon Supreme is Schwalbe's premium touring tyre, made with a supple casing strong enough for 6bar (85psi) and an inverted tread for easy rolling. The Multistreet 3 also has Marathon Supremes, but they're narrower at 32mm. There's clearance in the frame to fit a tyre one or two sizes bigger.

### Fixtures and fittings

These frames have the all the usual eyes and bosses for touring, minus a third bottle under the down-tube – an omission I notice now that pumps and locks also want those fittings. Additionally you get a pair of threaded bosses on the seatstays for a wheel-lock, another inside the right chainstay for attachment of a chainguard, whilst the left is adapted to receive a kickstand. Most tourists do not camp, so they not mind the lack of low-load



**3** Rose's lightweight adjustable stem

**4** Frames as light as the Multistreet's are easily dented

**5** Both bikes hang the mudguard from the carrier via the lamp fixing. It's a stronger, neater and lighter assembly than normal stays

bosses on the Multistreet's carbon fork. It wouldn't take much ingenuity to mount a carrier off the V-brake fittings.

Cube top-route the gear cables, which I don't recommend. Dirty water runs down the seatstay and cable, into the section of casing at the rear mech and makes shifting sticky. Neither do I like internal cables – except electric ones. A tapered head tube on the Multistreet, however, is not only good for steering and fork strength but also gives a straighter run for its internal cables.

I was surprised that neither of these trekking bikes has the stronger 6mm size of carrier leg fixing and was disappointed that both space the leg away from the boss, making the common problem of loose and lost carrier screws even more likely. Cube create a need to space out the carrier by using a tall-headed screw to attach the mudguard, then insert a soft plastic spacer that's broken and collapsed, so the leg is already slightly loose. Making a bad job worse: that gear cable casing has been routed outside of the carrier leg where it'll be rubbed to bits by a pannier!

Rose's dropout design sets the boss too far back, behind other features that block direct attachment of the carrier. It is easy to correct Cube's assembly mistakes with hex-head mudguard screws (that can also be tightened

### Also consider



#### 1) B'Twin Nework 5 £270

Probably the most capable bike available for under £300, with a full trekking spec featuring: alloy frame, Shimano dynamo and 24-speed Acera gears. [deathlon.co.uk](http://deathlon.co.uk)



#### 2) Focus Wasgo TR 2.0 £729

Lightweight rigid-fork trekker at a good price for 27-speed Deore equipment: £729 – if you can find one for sale in Britain. [focus-bikes.com/int/en](http://focus-bikes.com/int/en)



#### 3) Felt QX70-EQ £550

Felt's German hybrids come in an 'EQ' (equipped) version. Sometimes a few get to Britain, where the demand for trekking bikes is clearly lower; the one I bought my nephew was discounted to £315. UK distributors are [saddleback.co.uk](http://saddleback.co.uk)



#### 4) Koga Sportsrider £999

This model is sporty like the Multitrack, at the quality and price level of the Delhi. Dutch brand Koga supply lots of trekking options – most more expensive, some very light – from a thinly spread network of UK dealers. [koga.com/uk](http://koga.com/uk)



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with carrier in situ). Rose's design error can be helped by fitting a longer screw with a nut inside the dropout.

## Components

Both bikes are 10-speed, with identical numbers of teeth. So both have ridiculously high top gears. Bottom is low enough nevertheless for most purposes. If you propose a loaded tour in steep terrain however, a switch to 4-teeth smaller chainrings is easy and will help. Unnecessarily wide pedal track also goes with the territory.

The Delhi's V-brakes function reliably as expected, but the Multistreet's hydraulic discs are in a different league – one above cable discs. Both systems have levers that adjust for smaller hands simply by turning a screw, and are easier to pull than any drop bar lever – especially the hydraulics. With gear controls also at one's fingertips, better control and safety are key reasons to prefer flat bars.

Both bikes have Busch & Müller LED lights powered by a Shimano hub. As with the gears, you get components of the highest quality on the more expensive bike, but this kit is all so good you'll not notice the difference.

At first glance, the height of the Multistreet's handlebar appears to be fixed, but an ingeniously neat and lightweight arrangement of curved shims let the stem tilt up or down through 20°, giving 6cm of adjustment, the same as shuffling the Delhi's usual spacer stack. Big money also buys excellent Ergon grips with bar-ends rather than a reasonable substitute –

and a carbon seatpost. There are a lot of lighter ways to make a bike more comfortable than a steel frame!

Whichever 'Iceland' you're bound for (country or shop), Cube's Delhi is ready with a tubular alloy carrier rated at 30kg. Rose's Multistreet comes less ruggedly equipped, but 20kg is as much as anyone needs to tour without camping, or enough shopping to last a few days.

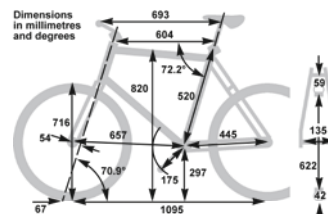
## Conclusion

Compared to a drop bar tourer, trekking bikes come with some 0.3kg of kickstand and 0.4kg lighting system, worth at least £100. Add those to the Claud Butler Dalesman reviewed last issue and you have exactly the weight of the Cube Delhi RF, which already includes this equipment for a lower overall price. The Rose Multistreet 3 is just as light as my Spa Titanium tourer, which likewise has a hub dynamo now and would cost rather more than £1628 to replace. But for that money the Rose bike also boasts a stand and hydraulic disc brakes. You may dismiss the stand, but you can't say trekking bikes are heavier than tourers. I'd happily tour on either of these.

Trekking bikes are also available at much lower prices than drop-bar tourers. And most also come in a 'ladies' version. So trekking bikes offer: better value for money; more equipment, more neatly installed; the same weight as a tourer; stronger brakes; wider gearing options; and component systems that work together just as Mr Shimano intended. Are you sure you still want those curly handles?

6 Cube's neat chainguard helps keep oil off your trousers and some dirt off the chain

## Tech specs



### CUBE DELHI RF

**Price:** £999

**Weight:** 14.40kg

**Sizes [tested]:** 46, 50, [54], 58, 62cm

**Frame & fork:**

Alloy frame & fork. Fittings for 2 bottles, guards, rear & low front carrier, wheel-lock, rear disc and stand

**Wheels:** Schwalbe Marathon Supreme 42-622 tyres, Schurman Yak19 rims, 36×3 2.0mm spokes, Shimano Deore hubs

**Transmission:** 30 speed, 22-123 in. Shimano Deore 48-36-26 chainset,

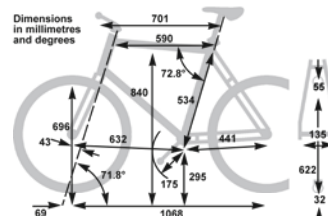
shifters, LX front, XT rear mech, 11-34 cassette

**Braking:** Shimano M422 V-brakes, Tektro Eclipse levers

**Steering & seating:** FSA 1½ headset, 90mm 17° stem, shallow riser bar. SR Freccia saddle, Easton alloy post

**Equipment:** 3N72 hub generator, B&M Fly-T head & Toplight Flat-Plus rear lamps, Racktime Addit carrier, SKS guards, Standwell rear stand, chainguard.

**Web:** cube.eu/uk



### ROSE MULTISTREET 3

**Price:** £1628 (inc. £68 shipping)

**Weight:** 12.50kg

**Sizes [tested]:** 17, 19, [21], 23, 25in

**Frame & fork:**

Alloy 6013 frame & carbon tapered steerer fork.

Fittings for: internal cables, 2 bottles, guards, rear carrier, V-brakes, wheel-lock, rear stand

**Wheels:** Schwalbe Marathon Supreme 32-622 tyres, Mavic 319D rims, 32×3 2.0mm spokes, Deore XT hubs

**Transmission:** 30-speed, 21-120 in. Xtreme pedals,

Shimano XT 48-36-26 chainset, shifters, mechs, 11-34 cassette

**Braking:** Shimano XT 160mm disc brakes & levers

**Steering & seating:** FSA 1½/1½ headset, 110mm ±20° stem, riser bar. Fizik Technogel saddle, Rose carbon post

**Equipment:** Shimano DH-T785 hub generator, B&M Cyo-T head & Toplight Line-Plus rear lamps, Tubus Fly carrier, SKS guards, Hebie stand

**Web:** rosebikes.co.uk