

CHOOSING THE RIGHT BIKE



The first steps while choosing a bike are identifying what kind of cycling you want to do and how frequently you want to ride.



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There are four main types of bikes; road bikes with drop handlebars and skinny tyres for road use, mountain bikes with knobbly tyres for off-road riding, hybrids which are a blend of both road and mountain bikes, and folding bikes which are ideal for city use. Your first question has to be 'Will I be riding on the road, off-road or a bit of both?'



Road bikes

Drop handlebar bikes as you see in the Tour de France are fast and exciting. The position of the rider is lower and racier than on a mountain bike. They are designed to climb and accelerate rapidly, corner fast and have smooth handling. Even within the category of road bikes there are subtle variations. The touring bike is designed for load carrying and all-day comfort. If you want to enjoy cycling holidays and all-day epics, this may well be the bike for you. Touring bikes are often equipped with low gear ratios to cope with carrying extra weight.

In race bikes designed for the thrill of speed, the position is slightly more stretched than the one a rider assumes on a touring bike. There are no mounts for racks. Race bikes are as light as possible for climbing and super stiff so that the maximum amount of rider power is transferred to the wheels. Somewhere in the middle is a range of 'comfort' oriented road bikes. This style of bike combines racing bike features, acceleration and light weight attributes with a more relaxed frame design for all-day comfort.



If you are riding all day but don't need to carry luggage, these are certainly worth a look. Road bikes come with either a double or triple chain ring at the front. Race bikes frequently have just the double chain ring, but if you are planning on carrying loads, riding a lot of hills or just beginning a comeback to fitness, a triple allows you a wider range of gears with easy gears for the climbs.



Mountain bikes

Mountain bikes are designed to handle anything you throw at them from towpaths and bridle ways to big rocky descents. Mountain bikes can be split into two main groups – hard-tails that only have suspension at the front and full-suspension bikes that have suspension at the rear as well.

Mountain bike suspension has been designed to absorb the shocks from riding over uneven terrain. It aids traction over difficult loose surfaces and helps you to control the bike. If you aren't trying anything too challenging, a hard-tail bike will provide enough suspension. If you fancy venturing into more extreme trail riding, then full-suspension can make the experience more comfortable and more exciting. It allows you to push your technical skills further.



MTB Hardtail

Mountain bike enduros – long distance mountain bike rides – are becoming increasingly popular as is the all-day epic and long challenging off-road rides. Lightweight trail bikes, with lots of travel and a comfortable position have been designed specifically with this style of riding in mind.

Cross-country mountain bike racers insist on the lightest bike possible for maximum gains on the climbs. These bikes have slightly less travel than the trail bikes as the emphasis is on speed and not comfort.

Another style of riding all together is downhill. Riders use ski lifts, truck "up-lifts" or push their bikes to the top of a mountain for a fast, technically challenging descent. These bikes are smaller for rider manoeuvrability, with lots of travel to soak up the big drops and heavy as weight is not an issue. Another popular type of mountain bike is the jump bike, a hard-tail bike with extra strong wheels and long-travel suspension forks designed for dirt jumping and urban riding.



MTB Downhill



MTB Hardtail

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Hybrid bikes

Sitting between road bikes and mountain bikes is the hybrid. Flat bars, a wide range of gears, road sized wheels and wide tyres means that it is just as much at home on the road as it would be on a cycle trail. While not sturdy enough to take on the roots and rocks a mountain biker relishes, it will be perfectly happy to trundle down a tow path or round the local park - and they are great around town too.

If you are looking for a bike to commute on, hybrids are a popular choice. The upright sitting position allows you to carry a rucksack easily and gives a clear view of the road ahead. Flat bars inspire confidence in traffic, and good bike control. Hybrids are also ideal for leisure and fitness cycling, low gears allow you to tackle gradients at your own pace and the position means that they are comfortable for the occasional as well as the frequent cyclist.



Folding bikes

If your journey requires you to hop on and off trains or buses and you are only pedalling for a short amount of time, a folding bike makes perfect sense.

Modern folding bikes are geared and have a proper cycling position that feels natural to ride. They can be quickly and conveniently folded down at the station or when you reach your destination. They also eliminate potential storage problems that normal bikes have, as they can be easily stored in a small flat or even under your desk at work.

At TI Cycles, we have over 60 years of experience matching bikes to customers. For further advice on selecting the right bike for you, please talk to us. Be it in-store, over the phone or on-line we're more than happy to take the time to ensure you purchase the right bike for your individual requirements.



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