

CYCLOPEDIA

Bike finder

Which bike should I buy?
Ask us at cyclinguk.org/bikefinder

Small, light bikepacking bike

• **For:** Katy Hill, aged 43, from Cirencester. • **Bike needs:** I'd like a bike that is as comfortable off-road as on lanes, and that can carry my tent, sleeping bag and supplies along King Alfred's Way. I'm planning also to explore the estate tracks and military roads of Scotland's highlands, wild camping. I'm only 5'3" and a bit. I'm used to mountain biking but want to go further and carry my tent and food. • **Must have:** Bosses to fix a pannier rack. More than one bottle mount on my size [S?]. 1x gears would be ideal. Hydraulic disc brakes. Light enough that I can lift it onto my car. • **Must not have:** Electric gears. Rim brakes. • **Budget:** £2,500



Katherine Moore

There are two potential sticking points here: rack mounts (which surprisingly few modern gravel bikes come equipped with); and the smaller size required. Thankfully some brands don't neglect shorter riders.

I suggest the **Sonder Camino AL GRX1 in S (£1,399, alpkit.com)**, which in a size Small is recommended for riders between 5'2" and 5'7". The aluminium alloy frame is built up with Shimano's gravel-specific GRX groupset, with a quality 1x FSA drivetrain as well as powerful hydraulic disc brakes, which come in especially handy on the descents with a loaded bike.

This alloy build comes in far below budget too, which means you could consider upgrading the wheels to a lighter carbon set, or leave plenty of spending money for your touring setup plus a lot of cafés along the way! Alternatively you could consider Sonder's titanium models, with the **Sonder Camino Ti GRX1 (£2,299)** priced much closer to your budget, including a wheel upgrade too.

Whichever frame material you choose, the Sonder Camino design boasts generous tyre clearance – up to 50mm-wide tyres on 700C wheels or an even chunkier 2.1" on smaller 650B wheels. There are also plenty of options for carrying water, with multiple bottle cage bosses both inside the main triangle as well as under the down tube. From cruising those local lanes to bikepacking the wilds of Scotland and King Alfred's Way, the Camino should have you covered.

**SONDER
CAMINO AL
GRX 1
£1,399**



Dan Joyce

A gravel bike with a drop bar is fine on rough roads and easier trails but a flat bar will be flat out better for control on any technical tracks you encounter in the Scottish Highlands. As a mountain biker, it's a setup you're used to. It's

also much cheaper. The **Sonder Camino AL Apex1 Flat (£869)** saves over £500 over the AL GRX1. It should also fit you better as the flat bar, on the same frame, will reduce the effective reach.

Few other gravel bikes come with a flat bar option. A rigid mountain bike would be good but, as we've noted before, they've all but disappeared. So I'm going to go against cycle industry orthodoxy and suggest... a hybrid. Specifically, a hybrid with 650x47B (47-584) or wider tyres, such as the **Whyte Victoria Commuter (£899, whyte.bike)**.

The size S should fit perfectly, as it's meant for riders from 5'0" to 5'4". It comes with the spec and fittings you require, weighs only 10.8kg, and has off-road ready geometry. Replace the 40t chainring with a 32 or 34 to reduce the gearing, and the tyres with tubeless gravel ones like **Continental Terra Trail** in 47-584 (@£39.95) or **Schwalbe G-One Bite TLE** in 50-584 (@£62.99).

Consider fitting an **On-One Geoff handlebar (£29.99)** or **Jones DB Loop H-Bar (£149)** to give a range of hand positions; you'd then need a longer gear cable and brake hoses. A rack and panniers will be heavier than bikepacking bags but a **Tubus Vega Classic rack (£100, 540g, clears a 60mm tyre)** and **Ortlieb Gravel-Pack panniers (£125, 1,160g/pair)** won't be too weighty.

**WHYTE
VICTORIA
COMMUTER
£899+**

