



DAWES VANTAGE

Chris Juden tests a touring bike that's half the price of a Galaxy

The Vantage is Dawes' entry-level drop-bar tourer. It's half the price of the Galaxy, whose price is now £1,200.

Touring bikes have a steel frame right? Wrong. Steel at this price will add nothing but weight to the bike and whilst aluminium does lack a certain resilience, comfort comes mainly from tyres. As for welding repairs: they're hardly ever needed. It's not very thin aluminium and whilst an aerodynamically flattened down-tube seems silly, everything is in the right place and we have all the key

fittings, so this frame will do fine – and its steel fork.

The wheels are a basic design, but built tight enough to last a couple of tours and perhaps a year of commuting. You won't get better even on a Galaxy, so save your money for a proper



Brake adjusters are sometimes missing from budget tourers. The Vantage has them

touring back wheel when these wear out. Those all-important tyres are a good model too, so I found the bike reasonably quick, sure-footed and comfortable.

Shimano's entry-level shifting equipment once again gives pause to wonder why anyone pays more. Indexing was flawless rear and front. I'd recommend a lower bottom gear for hilly tours and camping, but that would be simple to arrange with a smaller inner ring. They're all interchangeable and the bottom-bracket is good old square-taper.

Oryx aren't my favourite

brakes, but they worked fine. Many will swap the short stem for something longer, but it'll suit those who like a short reach. It's angled so the combined effect of flipping and spacers gives a generous 65mm of height adjustment.

Dawes fit a sturdy tubular alloy rear carrier. I'm less happy with the front mudguard. It has only one pair of stays and no safety-release. It won't take much to collapse it up to the fork crown, jamming the wheel.

Tourers are not just for touring. They're also ideal for commuting and shopping, wherever you want a bike that's efficient and easy to ride, that won't make you wet and dirty, that can take a bit of rough with the smooth and the load off your back. The Vantage will do all of that. Could you tour the world on half a Galaxy? Maybe not, but you could make a good start.

NEED TO KNOW

Dawes Vantage

Price: £600 (less from some dealers)

Contact:
dawescycles.com

Sizes available:
43, 48, 53, 58cm

Weight: 14kg (53cm)

Frame & fork: 6061 aluminium frame with fittings for 3 bottles, mudguard & carrier. CroMo steel fork with fittings for mudguard & low-load carrier

Gearing: 24-speed, 24-120in. 170mm Truvativ alloy cranks, 28/38/48T steel rings, 11-32T cassette; Acera/2203 mechs & shifters.

Wheels: Schwalbe Marathon 32-622 tyres, deep-section 19mm rims, 36x3 2.0mm stainless spokes, Quando hubs

Pros: Sturdy rear carrier. Brake adjusters. Decent gearing, wheels and tyres.

Cons: Risky front mudguard. Stem and saddle may need changing.

RIVALS



Dawes Horizon £800
£200 extra buys a Reynolds 520 steel frame that possibly feels a bit nicer, plus some minor upgrades
dawescycles.com



Revolution Country Traveller £500
A very similar bicycle for only £500. Includes auxiliary bar top brake levers. edinburghbicycle.com



Claud Butler Regent £580
Marginally cheaper but with a 30/42/52 chainset and a 12-26 cassette bottom gear is 30% higher!
falconcycles.co.uk