

# How to carry anything on your bicycle!

## If you want to speed along and carry the bare necessities...

Bike frames often include “braze-ons” (screw holes) to which carriers such as bottle cages and pump holders can be attached and you can be inventive with what you use these for. Items such as a puncture repair kit, mini multi-tool, and/or cagoule (raincoats that fold into their own small bag) can be carried in bags which attach under the saddle or to its stem (these cost about £10).

## If you're not sure what you may be bringing back...

Trying to blag even a short distance with an object grasped tentatively in your hands can be very distracting from the road you need to pay attention to, and will most probably interfere with your ability to steer and brake effectively.

Bungees are marvellous stretchy thingys that, like gaffa tape, hold the universe together! You can attach one to your rack and not even notice you're carrying it around, then jam stuff under as you go (bungee nets are more versatile still). You can even recycle your own from old inner tubes (cut out the valve area first). Always ensure that any object you bungee onto your bike is well secured and cannot interfere with your bike's moving parts or your comfort.

## If you're just nipping to the shop to get a pack of biscuits...

Small amounts of shopping can be put in a satchel or courier-style bag with a shoulder-strap which can be adjusted to stop the bag swinging around. Alternatively, a traditional handlebar basket (or a basket secured to a pannier rack using a bungee) can be used. There are also handlebar and rack-top bags, which keep your goods horizontal in transit (perfect for fruit salads or jelly!) For larger loads, you will want other options. Backpacks not only give you a sweaty back, they restrict movement and this can lead to back pain...

## If you need to appear smart or sophisticated!

If you're cycling to work or a posh do, there's even more reason to swap your backpack for panniers. These days you can get ones that look exactly like a normal office briefcase, and specially padded ones to protect and disguise laptops.



## If you are doing your weekly grocery shop...

Panniers are ideal for carrying large amounts of shopping. They come in varying sizes between 18 and 54 litres capacity per pair to suit your needs (costing £25 to £150 depending on size and quality – or ask in a second-hand bike shop). They clip easily onto a pannier rack, an essential addition to your bike's frame if you are thinking of using it as a utility vehicle (racks cost approx. £20). Panniers are usually sold in pairs, and though it is perfectly possible to use only one, heavy panniers will affect your bike's handling, so it's worth spreading items between two to aid balance (and practising before using them on a long journey). Also, consider distinguishing the panniers if they are a matching pair – you'll save a lot of time looking for your stuff!

Though some of the more expensive panniers have inbuilt rucksack or courier style straps, they are usually uncomfortable to carry by hand. It is best to take a re-usable bag along with you and to decant your stuff into your panniers when you cycle home. Considering polythene bags can take up to 1000 years to degrade it's best to avoid them anyway.

## If you are going on a long distance ride and need to carry supplies, tents, sleeping bags, cricket bats, etc...

Larger capacity rear panniers can easily support a long distance journey by bike, and lets face it, if you can't carry it, you don't need it! For those who require the extra carrying capacity (or prefer weight on the front of the bicycle), there are front racks and panniers.

For longer trips it is essential that your gear is kept dry so ensure your panniers are storm-proof (best to test this before you leave). Some come with raincovers - kept in a pocket, and taken out when it rains - others are manufactured to be 100% waterproof and secure in such a way that prevents rain oozing in. If you're paranoid about the effect of wet socks on morale, line your panniers with rubble sacks. And don't forget to pack your waterproofs!

## If you don't want everything on the bike itself...

Trailers are another (slightly more expensive) option. They come in a wide variety of styles – from flat-beds, to soft- and hard-top containers on one or two wheels, usually attaching to the rear axle of your bike somehow (costing £75 to £400). Some are specially designed to carry children, and even dogs, and some can be folded flat if needed. They can be picked up cheaper second-hand or you can contact mechanics / bike-recycling projects about custom building you one.

## If you want to carry big, heavy things on a regular basis...

There are a few companies in the UK who specialise in building load-carrying bicycles. Cycles Maximus ([www.cyclesmaximus.com](http://www.cyclesmaximus.com)) hand-build Pedicab Rickshaws (up to 3 adult passengers) and cargo trikes (250kg max payload!). These can have inbuilt (even solar-powered) electric-assist .