

Latest trend in cycling – gravel bikes

By Josh Petri, Bloomberg

If a mountain bike allows a rider to take the road not traveled, the gravel bike is designed to let riders take the road that's ... only sort of a road.

The bike industry has a long history of hyping new niche machines. Remember when fat tire bikes were all the rage? Gravel bikes are just the latest example. They're durable enough to handle modest terrain—gravel trails, fire roads, etc.—while remaining light and nimble enough to efficiently cruise on pavement as well.

At first glance, a gravel bike looks like, well, a bike. There are the classic drop bars, shifters, and the 700c rims of a road or cyclocross bike. But there are small tweaks and upgrades sprinkled throughout that help the bike handle rougher conditions. It has a slightly lower bottom bracket, and a longer wheelbase, which makes it more stable over uneven terrain at higher speeds. The wheels are wrapped in bigger tires, usually 32mm or 35mm wide, that do not require tubes. This lets riders run lower tire pressures for a better grip in a variety of surface conditions. Flat-mounted disc brakes offer greater modulation and stopping power than the rim brakes usually found on road bikes.

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