

CYCLOPEDIA

Bike finder

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Paul Rush

£3,000 steel tourer

• **For:** Paul Rush, aged 77, from Poole in Dorset. • **Bike needs:** To travel long distances, mainly on tarmac roads, fully loaded with camping and cooking gear, with four panniers, saddlebag and bar bag. • **Must have:** Steel frame, cable disc brakes, triple chainset with low gearing (around 20-100in), drop or flat bars, mudguards, 35mm tyres, 700C wheels. • **Must not have:** Dynamo lights – I use rechargeable lights with a PedalCell charger. • **Budget:** £3,000.



Simon Withers

A couple of years ago I rode the **Surly Disc Trucker** (surlybikes.com), which covers most of your bases. This cable-disc-equipped, all-steel tourer is comfortable for distance riding, although I think the £2,400 price is a little high.

As an aside, it's worth noting that smaller 650B and 26in wheels will be stronger than 700C, all things being equal – and 26in rims and tyres are still widely available worldwide. That said, I've done my three multi-thousand-mile trips on 700c wheels.

But for a bike with an excellent ride that I put hundreds of miles on when reviewing it, I'd happily recommend the drop-bar **Spa Wayfarer 9-spd Cable Disc** (spacycles.co.uk). It's available in eight different sizes, so you should be able to achieve a good fit, and it's made from Reynolds 725 steel, which Spa says is needed "for heavy load carrying with the compliance needed for long days in the saddle". It's beautifully finished and, as with all Spa's steel frames, it has undergone electrophoretic deposition for long-lasting protection.

It has TRP Spyre cable disc brakes and Shimano Sora shifters. While I tested it with a 48-38-28 chainset and an 11-34 cassette, which would give a 22in bottom gear with 35mm tyres, Spa could supply a 46-34-24 chainset (in black or silver and from 165-175mm). That would give an expedition-friendly 19in bottom gear.

The RRP is £1,575, but you could put some of your budget into a front rack and upgraded saddle, wheels and tyres. Spa makes its own wheels, and in my experience they've been superbly built and practically bombproof.

SPA CYCLES WAYFARER 9SPD CABLE DISC

£1,575



Dan Joyce

That £3,000 budget is the tricky bit. I normally recommend spending right up to your budget because you can get a better bike that way, and because you've mentally already assigned the money. But there aren't many steel tourers that meet your requirements at this price point.

If you were spending £1,000-£1,500, I'd echo Simon: get one of Spa's steel tourers. Beyond £2,000, there are also bikes like the Bombtrack Arise Tour, Genesis Tour de Fer 30 (see cyclinguk.org/two-grand-tourers for reviews of these), Kona Sutra and Surly Disc Trucker to throw into the mix. But then there's a big gap to more niche brands like **Mason**, whose lovely **SLR** costs from £4,100 (masoncycles.cc).

The **Stanforth Skyelander Disc** (stanforthbikes.co.uk) is not massively over your budget, however, and ticks all your other boxes. It costs £3,375 – before you add Tubus racks and mudguards, although the price does include a free fitting. The bike has 3x10 Shimano Deore XT gearing with a 20in bottom gear, Microshift BS-M10 bar-end shifters, TRP Spyre cable discs and 35mm touring tyres. The lugged steel frame (Reynolds 631/725) is made in England and sized to fit you. I've tested (and liked) a V-brake version of this bike.

If £3,000 is an absolute rather than negotiable limit, I'd suggest the **Oxford Bike Works Model 3** (oxfordbikeworks.co.uk). This also comes with bespoke fitting but starts at £2,299. It too has a 3x10 Deore XT transmission. It can be specified with flat or drop bars, disc or V-brakes, and 26in or 700C wheels.

STANFORTH SKYELANDER DISC

£3,375

