

First look
Bombproof tourer with wide-tyred 26in wheels and touring-ready gears. Fairly expensive

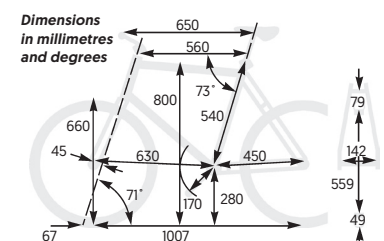


Photos: Simon & Shirley Withers

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The Surly’s 26t inner chainring pairs with a 34t sprocket for a much lower and more touring-friendly bottom gear
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Tech Spec
SURLY DISC TRUCKER

Price: £2,400.
Sizes: 42, 46, 50, 52, 54 [tested], 56cm [26in wheels]; 56, 58, 60, 62, 64cm [700C wheels].
Weight: 14.1kg [31lb].
Frame & fork: 4130 chrome-moly steel with open capture thru-axle, rack and mudguard mounts, three pairs of bottle bosses, spoke holder. 4130 chrome-moly steel lugged and brazed fork with open capture thru-axle, mudguard mounts and four bosses.
Wheels: 46-559 Surly Extraterrestrial tubeless-ready tyres, Alex Adventurer 2 26in rims, Novatec 6-bolt disc hubs, 36 14g spokes.
Transmission: FSA Alpha Drive 48-36-26 chainset, Shimano BB-RS500 bottom bracket, KMC X9 chain, Shimano Alivio 11-34 cassette. Shimano Sora levers, Shimano Sora front mech, Alivio rear mech. 27 ratios, 20-113in.
Braking: Shimano Sora levers, TRP Spyre C cable discs, 160mm rotors.
Steering & seating: Black cork tape, Surly Truckstop bar, Promax stem, Cane Creek 40 1 1/8in headset. WTB Volt Sport saddle, 27.2x350mm Promax offset seatpost.
Equipment: Surly rear rack, Surly kickstand plate, two spare spokes
surlybikes.com



TRP Spyre-C and the Sonder the more entry-level Tektro MD-C500. Both are dual-piston designs that work well. I think mechanical disc brakes are a good call for a tourer, possibly more than for any other bike. They lack the super-light, all-powerful action of hydraulics, but they are consistent in all weathers, and I'd be more confident fettling them far off the beaten track. And as with any disc brake, if you ding or dent your rim you can carry on riding, which is a huge and often overlooked touring benefit. After all, it could be a bit of a schlep to your next bike shop...



Top: Surly's slightly pricier cable discs are also decent
Bottom: More spokes and wider tyres make off-tarmac touring more practical

Both bikes have good quality bar tapes and handlebars, though the bars are very different. The Surly already has a longer head tube – a mighty 205mm – but the steerer comes with 6cm of spacers and the riser bar adds another 25mm or so. The bar's flare takes the drops out to 50cm from 44cm lever to lever. I found it offered excellent comfort and control. The Sonder's bar flares out from 40cm across the levers to 46cm at the drops.

I had no issues with the Surly's WTB saddle. While I know a lot of people

swear by Brooks leather saddles, such as the B17 fitted to the Sonder, I don't (although I do like Brooks's non-leather Cambium). If I were buying a Santiago, I'd probably pick the standard (non-Grand Tourer) model that costs £1,599, then add a Sonder saddle, guards, rack and cages. The Brooks saddle pushes up the price, as well as adding some weight.

Both the Surly and Sonder racks felt rock solid with the Altura and Vaude panniers I used. Surly's adjustable chrome-moly rack has a mighty 36kg (80lb) capacity that

I got nowhere near approaching. The Sonder's lighter aluminium rack has a more modest 18kg maximum load, which is more realistic these days for my legs and touring ambitions.

Ride

The combination of touring geometry, steel frames and wide – or super-wide – tyres means that both bikes are very comfortable.

The Surly's ride is a regal affair. I rode it in the position it arrived in, with its half dozen spacers, though you could