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Verdict

All these bars are bikepacking capable. Alpkit's Confucius is an affordable entry point into alt bars. For those who ride hard and light it's a great option, although it's not as comfortable for long-distance riding as the others. Velo Orange's Crazy Bar is the outlier in design, but despite the impracticalities it creates in terms of transport and tight singletrack, the confidence it lends to your ride is worth considering if you're not a fan of the loop. Jones and Surly both raise the bar (pun intended) in terms of luggage-carrying capabilities, extra equipment placement and overall comfort. Between the two, the Surly Moloko's lower price, steel tubing and 'hornlets' carry the day for me.



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1 Surly Moloko Bar

£129.99 surlybikes.com

THE HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER

In this review, the Moloko bar [anyone else thinking of A Clockwork Orange?] is 722g on my scales. That's down to it being made of steel; the others are aluminium. Steel helps eliminate some off-road buzz, meaning less stress on your paws over long rides. At 735mm wide and with a more modest sweep of 35° [10° less than the Jones], it's another comfortable bar that gives plenty of options for hand placement. There's guidance on where to trim the bar if you find it too wide. The wee 'horns' are a nice touch if you're trying to be aero – or need something to hold fast to when hauling yourself uphill.

▼ **A worthy and slightly cheaper alternative to the original Jones – although also heavier**

2 Jones SG Loop H-Bar

standard rise
 £149 jonesbikes.com

ARGUABLY THE BAR

that launched a thousand [well, quite a few] variations, there's a reason why the Jones bar is so popular: it's incredibly comfortable. Uncut at 710mm and weighing 625g, it can seem monstrous initially. Its length, 45° sweep and loop give multiple hand positions, providing comfort on all terrain, and allowing for a more upright or aggressive position as you see fit. The loop also gives plenty of room for lights, bells and other equipment, and provides a stable platform for fixing luggage. It's hard to fault the original alt bar, but the price may make some hesitate. Available in the UK from bothybikes.co.uk.

▼ **Incredibly versatile and rightly loved, but very expensive**

3 Alpkit Sonder Confucius

£34.99 alpkit.com

IF YOU'RE ALT-BAR

curious the wallet-friendly Confucius could be for you. The bar has minimal rise and sweep [15°]. The minimalist theme continues as it's also the lightest bar at 481g – despite being the second widest at 760mm. Modern mountain bikers will find the width and sweep familiar, with the smaller loop [in comparison to the Jones and Surly bars] also providing enough hand positions to prevent fatigue as well as space for gadgets. I found the lack of sweep meant these bars suited technical rather than longer rides, while the smaller loop was less convenient for lashing luggage to than the others reviewed here.

▼ **Best on test for shorter, technical bikepacking trips. Very affordable**

4 Velo Orange Crazy Bars v2

£109 velo-orange.com

THE ORIGINAL CRAZY

Bars had no rise, which was changed to a 40mm rise for the v2 on test. The name is highly appropriate, as even if accustomed to alt bars the width [780mm] of this one is a bit bonkers. This width can make train travel difficult in the UK [even more so than other alt bars], and you'll need to dial back your woodland and city riding until you get used to it. Despite the width, it's a modest 539g on the scales. Like the Moloko bar it has a 35° sweep, which gives a more relaxed, upright feel to the ride – although if you drop onto the 'horns' you can adopt are more wind-cheating posture. Available in UK from veloduo.co.uk.

▼ **Great for plains and moors. Maybe steer clear of forest singletrack!**