

CYCLOPEDIA

Bike finder

Which bike should I buy?
Ask us at cyclinguk.org/bikefinder



Sarah McClelland

Comfortable hybrid

• **For:** Sarah McClelland, aged 47, from Stockport • **Bike needs:** I want to be able to keep cycling – commuting and touring. I find the position on flat-bar hybrids uncomfortable. After my six-mile commute my neck really hurts. • **Must have:** Front suspension. Comfy seat. 27 gears – I have never been defeated by a hill! • **Must not have:** Rim brakes. I cycle every day and over winter they wear away so fast. • **Budget:** £1,500



SIMON WITHERS

First off, I think there's something well worth considering before buying a new bike – as I don't feel any bike, even with a rigid fork, should leave you suffering discomfort after riding just six miles. A professional bike fit

might well pick up on any potential physical issues contributing to your discomfort and should help you set up your present bike better – or ensure any new bike is the perfect fit. It should also help you choose your ideal saddle shape and size.

As for new bikes, there are a couple of flat-bar machines from well-respected manufacturers that fulfil your criteria, with 10-speed cassettes and triple chainsets offering you 30 gear ratios. They both have Suntour suspension forks with 63mm travel and a lockout switch.

The **Scott Sub Cross 10 (£1,049, scott-sports.com/gb/en)** is available in both men's and women's models and comes with wide-ranging Shimano Deore and XT gearing, with a hill-friendly 26/32 bottom gear, Shimano's excellent hydraulic disc braking and 45mm Kenda tyres. It weighs 12.7kg and has a maximum system weight of 128kg.

The **Cube Nature Pro (£899, cube.eu/uk-en)** is available with either a dropped – AKA 'trapeze' – or near horizontal top tube, and is also based around Deore and XT gearing, with an even lower 26/34 bottom gear and Shimano hydraulic discs. It has a maximum rider and bike weight of 115kg and is a little heavier than the Scott at 14.1kg, though you could trim some of that for road use by going for narrower tyres than its 50mm Schwalbes.

SCOTT SUB CROSS 10 £1,049



DAN JOYCE

It sounds like you've been riding hybrids with flat bars that are too low, too far for you to reach comfortably, or both. That will stretch you out and make you crane your neck, as well as forcing you to lean too much of your weight onto the handlebar. It might also mean your arms are locked out, so any vibration from the front wheel will come straight up your arms, exacerbating any shoulder and neck pain. I think you need to sit more upright.

The **Cube Touring EXC (£1,099, cube.eu/uk-en)** ticks all your boxes. It also comes with Cube's Comfort Pro adjustable stem, which will enable you to set the handlebar higher and closer. That should alleviate your neck issues. But it is heavy at 16.9kg, due to its suspension fork and extensive equipment. In subsequent correspondence you requested something lighter.

So my recommendation is the **Spa Cycles Elan 725 Mk1 Flat Bar Sora 9-speed Triple** (currently **£1,210, spacycles.co.uk**), which weighs less than 11kg. Its taller head tube should sit you up better than the hybrids you've owned; I've included a photo of just the frameset to show this as clearly as possible.

You can specify the bike with **BBB Butterfly Trekking Bars** and 40mm **Schwalbe Marathon Supremes** (in stock at Spa Cycles) for extra comfort, and with the chainring sizes of your choice for easier climbing. The Elan doesn't come with a suspension fork but a suspension stem such as the **Redshift ShockStop (£199.99)** should be sufficient for the riding you describe. I think you'd want the shortest, 80mm length.

SPA CYCLES ELAN 725 MK1 FLAT BAR £1,210

