

# NEW BIKE TESTED

## WHY THIS BIKE?

Perfect for people taking on world challenges

## BEST FOR

Heading off into the great unknown

## TESTED THIS MONTH

On smooth roads, farm tracks, and light off-road trails



# Dawes Coast2Coast £999.99

## 26in wheel adventure touring machine

### Matt Lamy

**B**irmingham's finest, Dawes Cycles, is best known for its flagship Galaxy touring bikes, but this year the guys and gals at Castle Bromwich have pushed the envelope with a whole range of new drop-bar options. There's a sexy new carbon road bike, a couple of great sportive-perfect models called 3IMA, and here we have one of two new 26in-wheeled adventure touring bikes. This Coast2Coast model is the less expensive of the pair, coming in below the Cycle to Work threshold at £999.99.

### Frameset

Dawes's touring bikes are inextricably linked with Reynolds steel tubing, and

even though the Coast2Coast's wheel size is a little unusual, it's still Reynolds pipes at its heart. The smartly joined frame is put together using Reynolds 520 tubing — a very sensible frame material for expedition touring, as it offers a forgiving ride quality with the ability to be fixed by anybody with even rudimentary welding skills.

The Coast2Coast also comes with a chromoly steel fork, which has mounting points for front racks, while a Move Ride Lorry rear rack and SKS Chromoplastic mudguards come fitted as standard. There are also mounting points for three bottle cages. As we expect with modern bikes, the finish of the Coast2Coast is nigh-on perfect, and a classy heritage-inspired Dawes head tube badge sits proudly as a masthead.

### Components

One problem companies like Dawes face is that they don't have the buying power of global firms such as Trek or Specialized, and they can't cut margins in quite the same way as direct-to-customer brands. However, look at the

**“Reynolds steel tubing is very sensible for touring. It's forgiving and easy to fix”**

## Specification

**Frameset:** Reynolds 520 chromoly steel, fork chromoly steel

**Gears:** Shimano Sora (front mech) Alivio (rear) with Dura-Ace bar-end shifter, nine-speed, 11-34t

**Brakes:** Shimano BR517 mechanical discs

**Chainset:** Shimano Alivio triple

**Wheels:** Alex DP17

26in rims on Shimano

Deore hubs

**Tyres:** Schwalbe

Marathon 26x1.75in

**Handlebar:** Dawes

aluminium flared drop

**Stem:** Aluminium

**Saddle:**

Dawes Comfort Touring

**Seatpost:** Aluminium

**Size range:**

48, 53, 58cm

**Weight:** 14.1kg / 31lb

(without rack)

**Size tested:** 53cm

**Contact:** www.

dawescycles.com

spec of the Coast2Coast and it's hard to see how anybody could offer much more for the sub-£1k asking price. The gears are made up of a Sora front mech that combines quite a refined action with good reliability; a very hardy Alivio rear mech; and you even get a taste of Dura-Ace, albeit only with the bar-end gear shifters. The chainset, also an Alivio model, is a triple that combines with the 11-34t cassette to make almost any slope conquerable, even weighed down with your life in pannier bags.

Brakes are very impressive Shimano BR517 mechanical discs operated by both Tekro brake levers on the drops and secondary levers on the flats. Other components feature rather nice details, such as the flared aluminium bars and a touring saddle with a Dawes logo imprinted on it.

### Wheels

The spec doesn't even take much of a hit when you reach the wheels. The unique selling point of this particular range of bikes are those 26in wheels, which Dawes has opted to fit because the reduced diameter means they should be stronger than full-size 700c hoops for adventuring. The Alex rims feel plenty tough enough and being laced to Shimano Deore hubs means they'll run smoothly, too.

The Schwalbe Marathon tyres offer enough grip for anything up to paths **▶▶**





Reynolds 520 frame soaks up the bumps

or hardpack trails, without sacrificing too much speed on smooth asphalt, while their 1.75in diameter aids comfort.

#### Riding

The Coast2Coast is comfortable for the most part, although those stiff 26in hoops do go a little way in counteracting the natural compliance of the steel frame. It's not quite as smooth a ride as, say, a Dawes Galaxy on full-size wheels, but you do still benefit from steel's natural reaction to bumps. So you don't feel imperfections in one hit as you would on an aluminium or many carbon frames; the shock builds up a little slower and disperses more gradually. Essentially, it lets you roll with the punches.

One benefit of those 26in wheels, though, is a far more lively ride than a typical steel touring bike. They seem to accelerate a lot quicker and control is a lot more direct than the relaxed handling you'd find with tourers. In short, it's a lot of fun, although not so lively that you've got to be on your pins the whole time.

#### Conclusion

Dawes really knows how to put together some very endearing touring, trekking and adventure bikes, and the Coast2Coast, with its 26in wheels, is an exciting tweak on old ideas. The spec is superb, the frame is great, and it's just a little bit different from most run of the mill drop-bar bikes.

What do those reduced-size hoops offer? More fun and more strength at a slight cost to comfort. But it's a very fair trade, and results in a bike that could make a lively little commuter when you're not crossing the Himalayas. Don't forget, it would make a fine tourer for less exotic locations, too (to read our go-anywhere adventure bike group test turn to page 44.)

**End**



Mechanical disc brakes: reliable and strong

## VERDICT

**A fine option for cycle touring off the beaten track**

### Spot on...

- Reynolds 520 frame is very smart: Good value, clever spec — with a taste of Dura-Ace
- 26in wheels are strong, lively and fun
- Quality bar-end shifters allow for perfect gearing

### Could do better

- Not quite as good for road touring as, say, Dawes's Galaxy

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	17/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	20/20
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	<b>93/100</b>

## ALTERNATIVES

### Surly Long Haul Trucker £1,025

The Long Haul Trucker is one of the few other 26in drop-bar touring bikes we know of. The chromoly steel frame features thicker-walled tubes for strength, which is handy because it's positively bristling with fixing points for mudguards, racks and bottle cages. Shimano Sora and XT make up the gears, with Tektro canti brakes.

[www.ison-distribution.com](http://www.ison-distribution.com)



### Raleigh Sojourn £1,100

Although it runs on full-size 700c hoops, the Sojourn has plenty in common with the Coast2Coast. There's a Reynolds 631 steel frame, nine-speed Shimano gearset with Sora triple chainset, and Avid BB5 mechanical disc brakes. For a bit of luxury, you even get a Brooks B17 leather saddle, too.

[www.raleigh.co.uk](http://www.raleigh.co.uk)



## CA EXPLAINER

### Bar-end shifters

Anyone used to STI levers may think it's a bit of a chore reaching down to the bar-ends to change gear, but as well as being very simple to use and fix, these shifters provide one huge bonus for pernickety bike-faffers. The left shifter for the front mech is not indexed, meaning you can adjust it minutely as you ride, thereby eliminating chain rub altogether. Not only good for chain longevity, but also your sanity on a 1,200km trek.



Dura-Ace bar-end shifters add a high-end touch