



Cycling With Children

Newborn

Two choices here - carry the baby in a sling on your front, this generally requires a more upright stance on the bike, more 'Dutch' bike than mountain bike. The other option is to use an attachment on a rear rack that carries the baby in a car seat.

Various child carrying hardware is made by Steco in the Netherlands
www.steco.nl/



6 months to 4 years (approx)

There is a bewildering choice of what to use for this age group. First of all the obvious choices and then some equipment to make life easier!

The way most people carry children is with a bike seat behind the saddle. This clamps onto the seatpost or the rack. You need to be aware that this usually means that the rack is now no use for carrying things just when you need extra space. Try hanging a rucksack onto the back of the child seat or small panniers can sometimes still fit on the rack. There are alternative seats that fit onto the front of the bike, either in front of the handlebars facing backwards or behind the handlebars facing forwards. These are very popular in Holland usually fitted with a little windscreen to protect the child.



Another item from Steco is this rack extension that will hold a child buggy. Useful for cycling into town when the child is too young to walk around with you.



Argos sell child seats (and other cycling bits. Hamax (www.hamax.no/) are a well known maker of quality seats. BoBike (www.bobike.nl/) are the Dutch manufacturer including the windscreen shown above.

The other main way is to use a trailer. They used to be rather expensive but recently they have become cheaper presumably because of Chinese manufacture. Halfords sell both single and double child trailers. If your usual route includes 'cycle gates' do check if the double width will go through, singles are usually OK.

Some models can be fitted with a small front wheel and become push chairs. there is usually some luggage space behind the sitting area.



Alternatives

Pashley bikes of Stratford upon Avon used to make a tricycle with two rear facing child seats. Expensive but a compact way to carry two children. These sometimes are available on eBay.

Longbikes, there are several designs of 'longbikes' appearing on the market. Basically the rear wheel is further behind the saddle than a normal bike and they have a long rack. This can often accommodate two children. Examples of these are the Xtracycle and Yuba Mundo. In Holland a version is sold ready fitted with two child seats.



Of course these are expensive options but if you are embracing a cycling lifestyle they are much more useful than just carrying children. These bikes are built to last.

5 and over

Children from this sort of age can often ride their own bike for short distances. The problem is they are not safe to ride safely on roads. This is where the trailer bike comes in useful. Basically a single wheel trailer which the child can pedal as well. The most common version fits onto the seat post of the adults bike. Some versions have a folding boom which aids storage. A different way of pulling a child along is the 'Trailgator', this is an arm that tows a normal child's bike but lifts the front wheel off the ground. With this a child can cycle when safe but then when tired can be towed along.



Alternatives

There is a trailer bike made in Germany that pivots on the rear of a special rack, that allows you to have a child seat behind the saddle and a trailer bike. In fact the rack will fit the trailer bike as well so you could add a whole train of bikes! Pashley used to make both a single and tandem trailer bike with two wheels at the back, again often available on eBay. Tandems can be bought that have a lower saddle at the rear or adult rear with an extra crank higher up for little legs.

More

Also popular in mainland Europe are bikes and trikes with a box at the front to carry children, up to six on some trikes! The two wheeled version known as Bakfiets are very stable as the load is low down.



Remember - children not pedalling will be colder than you, drinks and something to eat can extend a child's tolerance!