

HEAVY HAULAGE

The Yuba Mundo load bike will carry up to 200kg or two passengers. And it costs only £550. Dan Joyce tested it with both people and freight



When you need to carry more than your bike-plus-panniers can handle, a trailer is the most economical next step: a child trailer will accommodate two pre-school children or a week's worth of groceries. The more expensive option is a cargo bike or trike. Most have a four-figure price tag. The Yuba Mundo – a 'long bike' in the same mould as the Xtracycle Free Radical – is different. It costs little more than a high-quality trailer.

Frame and fork

The Mundo is welded together, not very prettily, from high-tensile steel tubing. It's very heavy and very sturdy, with a maximum recommended load of 200kg. There are two parts to the frame: the main frame and the cargo rack, which fixes to it with six big Allen bolts. The bad news is that the bolt holes don't quite align. As the cargo rack is triangulated and made from 20mm steel tubes, it's not a trivial matter to re-space it. I only succeeded in building up the boxed test bike thanks to a thick wooden bar for leverage, some sweat, and an

assistant to screw the bolts home. If you don't fancy grappling with the bike, be sure to buy it ready-built from a Yuba dealer such as BikeFix.

The top of the cargo rack measures 23cm x 82cm. The tubing is too thick for standard pannier hooks and the width means most child seats won't fit either. On the other hand, there are bolt-on foot-bars at the bottom of the rack. Because of these you can load the Mundo with all kinds of things: boxes, gas bottles, canoes, people...

The rear dropouts are forward facing (for the singlespeed version) and have a derailleur hanger (for the geared Mundos). There are mudguard eyelets front and rear but no bottle mounts.

Cargo and passengers

Get plenty of webbing luggage straps. The open rack frame provides ample attachment points, and with a big load you need to spend time strapping everything down. For smaller or loose items, like groceries, you'll need crates or boxes. Yuba make one pannier that will fit (85 litres, 75 Euros), or you could use throw-over style motorcycle saddlebags such as Ortlieb's.

To make loading easier, it's worth

(Above) Low standover, backswept handlebars and a 450mm seatpost mean that one size really will fit most riders

(Right) The limitation on what you can carry isn't the rack but the single gear

investing in a twin-leg centre stand like the Hebie Bi-Pod, which is standard on more expensive Mundos. Leaning the bike against a wall while trying to manage both load and bike is tricky. It's easier if you lock one of the bike's brakes on using a toe-strap.

To carry passengers, you'll want some kind of wooden or metal deck for the top of the rack. (I used thick cardboard during the test.) While you're at it, add side panels to the rack to shroud the rear wheel to keep out fingers, toes and loose clothing – especially if you'll be carrying children. It would also be worth fitting tandem stoker bars to the Mundo's seatpost – and maybe a motorcycle-style grab bar at the back of the rack. For pre-school passengers, you'll need a child seat (or seats – there's room for two) that are both wide enough between the foot-wells and that have compatible attachment points. Yuba's own (89 Euros, and available from BikeFix) definitely fits.

Equipment

This is the cheapest version of the Mundo, and it comes with neither mudguards nor multiple gears. Six- and 18-speed derailleur versions are available. Unless you live somewhere really flat, such as York or Cambridge, you'll want one of them. The 56" gear of the singlespeed is fine on the flat but it's hard work pedalling such a

heavy bike up any kind of slope even *without* a load.

Stopping power comes from two V-brakes. These are just about adequate. One problem is that the rack struts prevent easy Allen key access to the rear brake blocks. I finger-tightened them and then finished the job with the rear wheel removed. If you want better brakes – because you *don't* live somewhere flat – then hydraulic rim brakes such as Magura's HS33 would



be a good upgrade. Disc brakes would be expensive, requiring new frame fittings and new wheels.

The Mundo's wheels are sturdy, with heavy-gauge spoke, 48 of them at the rear. They're laced to solid-axle hubs and wide, single-wall aluminium rims. The fat, cruiser tyres are rated to just 2.8 bar. Really you want more pressure than that in a load bike's tyres, just as you would on a tandem. But over-inflate with caution, after taping over the prominent spoke heads in the rim well, or you risk exploding the tubes.

The ride

'Awesome', according to my teenage son riding pillion. At 67kg, his weight matched mine, and the Mundo's handling with us both aboard was good. Steering was predictable and there was very little wobble, even when I took a hand off the bars to signal. The only time the front wheel felt light and sketchy was when I had a *second* teenager riding pillion (combined passenger weight: 127kg) and we hit some bumps. Bike control was harder in general, particularly when passenger number two – sitting behind the rear axle – moved around.

On the whole, the Mundo was fairly manageable. The main issue, given the single gear, was that it was tiring to cycle any distance with big loads. I wouldn't want to ride more than a handful of miles with even one adult passenger. Unladen, it was like riding a really heavy roadster.

Like any big bike, the Mundo isn't easy to live with when you get off it. It's cumbersome to move around,



being heavy, long, and 52cm wide. It will go through doors, but forget flights of steps. A big shed or a garage would be the best home.

Summary

I like the Yuba Mundo a lot. It's not exactly precision-made and it's preposterously heavy, but for carrying big, boxy loads or passengers it's affordable, sturdy and fun. For utility cyclists wanting to cut down or eliminate those short-distance car journeys where you're essentially a taxi driver or a light haulier, it could be just the thing. In its most basic form it doesn't cost much more than the Xtracycle Free Radical, which requires a spare bike to bolt onto, while its carrying capacity dwarfs the Kona Ute, which lacks foot-bars. Get a geared Mundo, fit the necessary accessories, and go to town!

“Because of the rack’s foot bars, you can load the Mundo with all kinds of things: boxes, gas bottles, canoes, people”

TECH SPEC

Bike	Yuba Mundo singlespeed
Price	£550 (as of March 2009)
Weight	28kg/61.6lb (as pictured)
Size	42.5cm
Colours	red; 6-speed is blue.
Sizes available	one size
Frame and Fork	Hi-ten steel, with dedicated carrier rack made from 20mm steel tubing. Forward facing rear dropouts, gear hanger, fittings for V-brake and mudguard. Hi-ten steel fork with fittings for V-brake, mudguards, bottle dynamo.
Wheels	Kenda Cruiser 54-559 tyres on 21mm single-wall aluminium rims, 36x2 2.34mm spokes (front) 48x2 2.34mm spokes (rear) on solid-axle hubs.
Transmission	Aluminium platform pedals. Unbranded 170mm chainset with 38T chainring, cartridge bottom bracket, 18T freewheel. 1-speed, 56-inch gear.
Braking	Promax V-brakes
Steering & Seating	1 1/8in threaded headset, 8cm aluminium quill stem, cruiser handlebar, Selle Royal Sky sprung saddle, 450mm plain seatpost
Accessories	none. Many available.
Contact	www.bikefix.co.uk, tel: 020 7405 1218

The Rivals



Kona Ute
£635.99

A higher-spec, smaller-load long-bike, with an aluminium frame, 16-speed gearing, cable disc brakes, wooden deck, mudguards, and custom long panniers.

www.konaworld.com



Surly Big Dummy
£850 (frame & forks only)

Chrome-moly frame with both disc and V-brake mounts, designed to fit the modular Xtracycle kit, which includes side-bars/foot plates. Max load: 90kg.

www.ison-distribution.com



Xtracycle Free Radical
£450

Bolt-on back end that converts a solo bike – hardtail MTB is best – to a long bike. Includes frame, bags, wooden deck, extra length of chain, etc. Max load: 68kg.

www.ison-distribution.com

