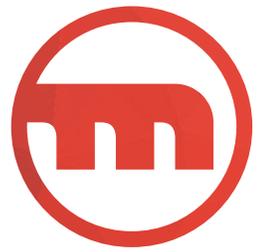




Momentum Mag Presents...



Carrying Your Life by Bike:
A Comprehensive Guide to

Cargo Bikes

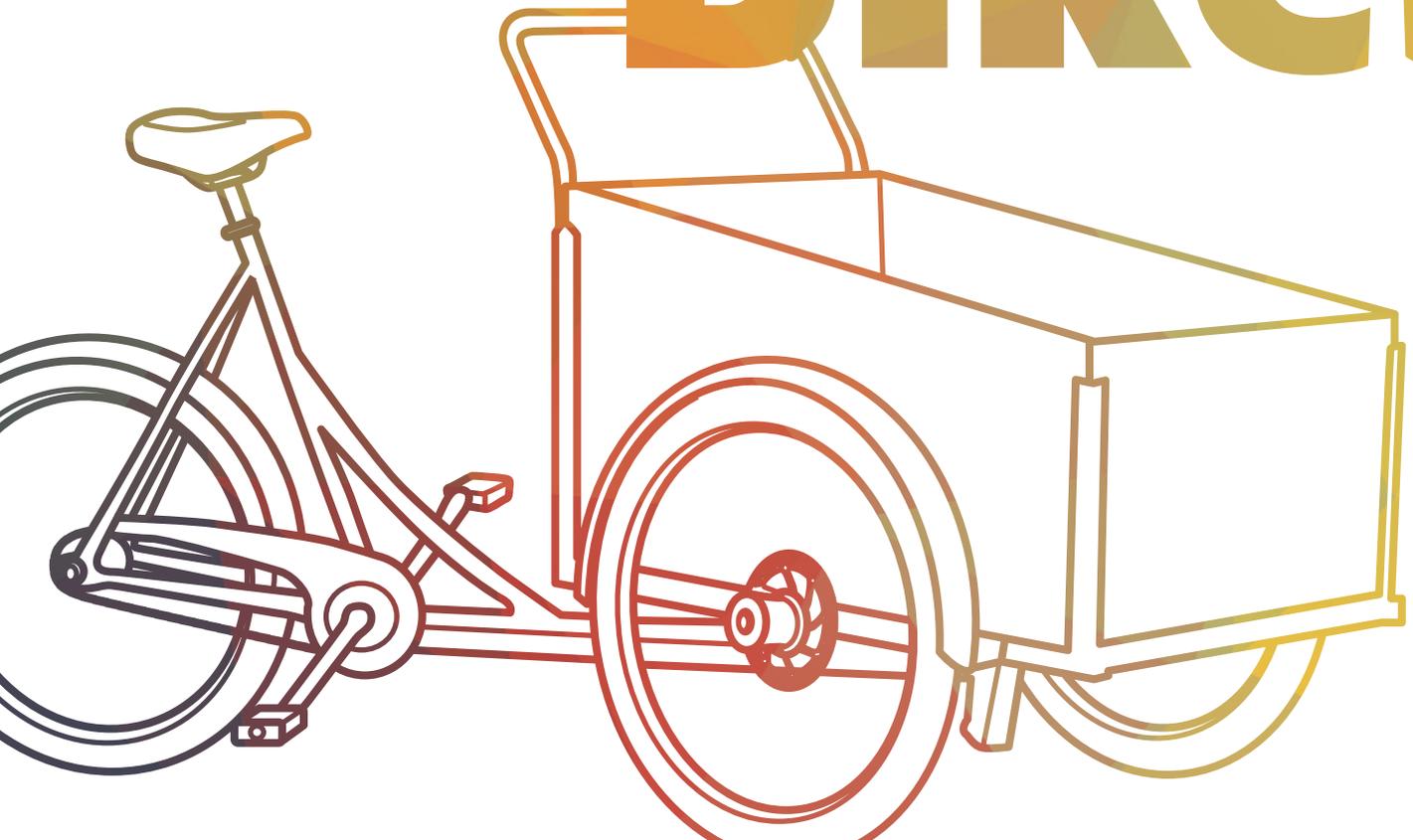


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Picture this: you have two young kids that you're picking up at school, one of them is bringing a friend over, the school is 3 miles from your place, the kids have backpacks, and you need to get groceries on the way home. Or maybe this: you work in the trades, you bring tools to work every day, you have to travel a lot between jobs, and you live and work in a hilly area. What do you do?

If you're anything like most North Americans, you get in your car. Unfortunately, the vast majority of people on this continent either refrain from regular bike commut-

ing, or stop doing so once they have children or get a job that requires travel with cargo because they simply don't see bike commuting as a feasible option for their specific circumstance. "Great for college students, maybe, but it won't work for my lifestyle."

While much of that hesitation is rooted in the prevailing North American attitude that views cars as the best (or only) transportation option, there are many people who would like to commute by bike but simply aren't aware of their options.

However, as our cities invest more heavily in safe cycling

infrastructure, more and more people are beginning to view bicycling as a feasible option for their daily commute. As such, cargo bikes have seen a small surge in popularity, and an even bigger surge in interest as people explore their options for bike commuting with kids, careers, and the general load-bearing responsibilities that accompany adulthood.

To give a gentle nudge in the bike direction, we've put together a guide to cargo bikes for North Americans to get you started.

- Momentum Mag Team

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COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS** + DESIGNED BY **YUVAL BURTON**



Why You Want a Cargo Bike

WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS** + PHOTO BY **BEN JOHNSON**

While your trusty old commuter bicycle enables you to replace a car for the majority of trips you'll take in a day, a cargo bike enables you to step up your game and leave the car at home for basically every local trip. Traveling with kids? Gardening equipment? Tools? Kids, gardening equipment, and tools? No problem, your cargo bike can handle it. While we'll concede defeat and admit that they can't hold literally everything, unless you're carting around 25 ft steel beams, a shipment of livestock, or 250 lbs of live

lobsters, you'll probably be alright with the cargo bike.

Cargo bikes are, in essence, a workhorse that you don't have to feed. They enable the transportation of many more pounds of goods than you could possibly carry on a regular bicycle, with much more economic and environmental efficiency than you get from a car. They're your family vehicle, your work truck, your moving van, your party bus. They're everything you would need a car for, but much more affordable, much more sustainable, and much more fun.



A Brief History of Cargo Bikes

WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS**

Cargo bikes originated in The Netherlands in the early 20 century, where they were used by tradesmen to deliver milk, bread, and other goods in the absence of the automobile. By the 1930s, the phenomenon had spread across Scandinavia. In Copenhagen, Denmark, bike messengers called svajeres carted goods all around the city, and nearly every company owned at least one cargo bike to handle their deliveries.

Around the same time in the UK, deliveries were being made by “butcher’s bike,” a light-capacity cargo bike with a rack mounted to the frame over the front wheel. The Butcher’s Bikes were essen-

tially the equivalent of a modern-day cycle truck, and although the name would suggest otherwise, it was actually postmen who had the largest fleets of cycle trucks.

The British trend spread to the US, where Schwinn produced the original American “cycle truck,” in 1939. At its peak of popularity during WWII, the Schwinn cycle truck sold over 10,000 units in one year.

While cargo bikes have remained immensely popular for carting everything from kids to couches in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, their use waned considerably in North America when mass marketing of the private automobile began in earnest. By 1969, Schwinn had discontinued

the cycle truck. These days, many North Americans have never even heard of a bicycle with significant carrying capacity.

Only with the recent trend towards high-density urbanism have we seen a resurgence of interest in cargo bikes on this side of the pond. Homegrown innovation by Xtracycle has seen the development of the long- and midtail style cargo bike, with a number of North American manufacturers following suit. But like regular bicycles, many cargo bike designs remain remarkably similar to their original turn-of-the-century structures, with a few modern upgrades.

Types of Cargo Bikes

WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS** + ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ROBERT HIGDON**

A cargo bike is essentially any bicycle, tricycle or pedal-powered four-wheeler which was designed specifically to carry a load – large or small. In its simplest form, a cargo bike can be a bike with a built-in, reinforced front basket for heavier-than-normal daily transportation needs. In its most complex, it could be an electric-assist box trike with refrigeration capabilities. While these days, the variations of cargo bikes on the market create a bit of crossover between the categories, most cargo bikes fit roughly into the following seven types:



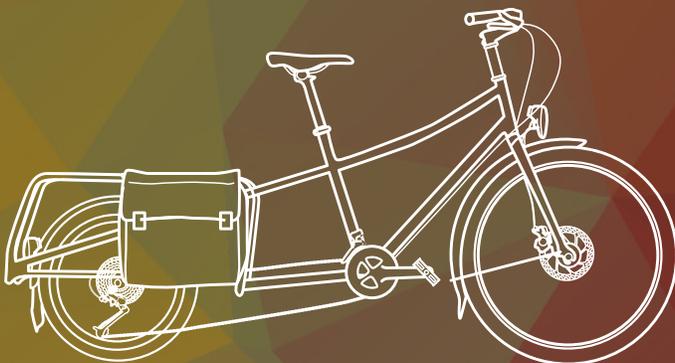
UTILITY BIKES

Utility bikes are built with a traditional wheelbase, but with reinforced frames that enable them to carry larger loads than a standard bicycle. They often have metal front baskets and/or back racks built onto the frame, and are designed to be nimble and easier to ride than larger cargo bikes while still maintaining considerable carrying capacity.



CYCLE TRUCK

Cycle trucks have the same overall size of a standard city bike, but they have a smaller front wheel (typically 20" compared to a 26" rear), with a front rack affixed to the frame over the wheel. The rack either has a box mounted to it, or has mounting options for when you need the box, and space for when you don't.



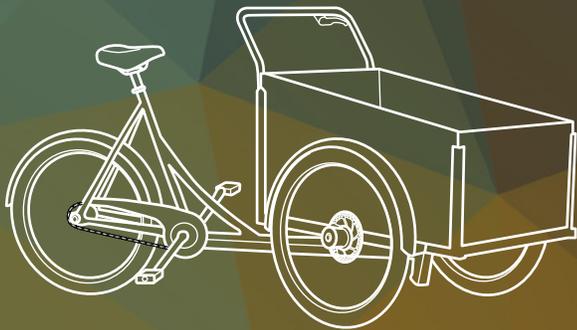
LONGTAIL

Longtails have an extra-long wheelbase at the back, which accommodates an extended, built-in deck to carry cargo or children. Longtails typically come with open-top panniers to hold cargo at the sides, have hooks for webbing to secure cargo on top, and have options for handles or backrests to transport children. Many newer models of longtail have a smaller rear wheel (20" compared to 26" at the front) for a lower center of gravity and better handling.



MIDTAILS

You could think of a midtail as a “Longtail-lite.” Rather than an extra-long wheelbase at the rear, they simply have the rear wheel set back a bit from the seatpost to allow your feet to turn the pedals without getting caught on your cargo. They have the same built-in cargo deck for transporting materials or children, with options for panniers, child seats, and webbing. The advantage of the midtail is easier lifting and storage, and if you’re not constantly transporting around a ton of cargo, they look and feel much like a regular bicycle.



BAKFIETSEN/BOX BIKES

Bakfietsen (singular: bakfiets) were developed in the Netherlands in the late 19th century. They were originally a three-wheeler, with a wooden box at the front between the two parallel wheels. Today, the term bakfiets is used to refer to two-wheeled box bikes as well, but we’ll get to that in a minute. Many bakfietsen have seats and seatbelts built into the box for transporting children, and they almost always have a perfectly upright riding posture.



CARGO TRICYCLES/RICKSHAWS

Tricycles or Cycle Rickshaws feature an elongated frame with two wheels at the back for added stability, with a cargo platform or seat between them. They can be adapted to accommodate other requirements, such as refrigeration boxes, for use as work vehicles. Cycle rickshaws are common in parts of Asia and Africa as bike taxis, and are becoming increasingly popular for tourism and last-mile delivery in Europe and North America.



LONG JOHNS

Long Johns were developed in Denmark in the early 20th century. They have an extraordinarily long wheelbase at the front and a smaller front wheel, with the cargo area or an attached wooden basket sitting low to the ground between the handlebars and front wheel. In modern parlance, Long Johns are often lumped into the bakfiets category due to the box, but its original structure is quite different than the traditional three-wheeled bakfiets.



How to Ride a Cargo Bike

WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS** + PHOTO BY **DAVID NIDDRIE**

Learning to ride a cargo bike varies in difficulty depending on the type, the terrain, and your stature. Longtail cargo bikes are by far the easiest to ride, and loaded up with less than 50 lbs should feel little different than a regular upright bicycle.

For a Long John-style bakfiet or any form of front-loader, you may need to do some work in re-learning how to balance in a straight line, as the extended steering tends to make you overcompensate for small imbalances by sharply turning the front wheel. Keep your eyes on the horizon rather than on the front wheel,

and eventually you'll develop confidence on the bike and balance will no longer be an issue.

With any model of cargo bike, it's when it's loaded with cargo that you'll feel the real difference. Whichever type you go with, the best approach will always be to take your bike for a few rides on quiet streets, empty of cargo. Get a feel for the new width or length, as you'll have to develop a new sense of spatial awareness for your increased size. Slowly add weight and practice turning, stopping, starting, and riding uphill before you get into traffic.

If you're a particularly small-statured person, not all models will work for you. Look out for bikes with a low center of gravity such as Bike Fridays, Yubas and some bakfiet models.

When you're loading up your cargo, keep weight distribution in mind as it will have an impact on the way you ride. Keep heavier items towards the bottom of your box or bags, and do the best you can to evenly distribute weight on either side of the bike. As a general rule no matter your stature, the lower the center of gravity, the easier the bike will be to ride.



How to Buy a Cargo Bike

WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS** + PHOTO BY **RICHARD MASONER**

There are a few things to consider now that we've convinced you to buy a cargo bike, the most important of which is the type of bike itself. While all cargo bikes are good for carrying things, different types have considerably variant benefits depending on what you're planning to carry and where. A few things to keep in mind:

Use and Infrastructure

Consider what you're most likely to be carrying around, the kinds of roads you'll be riding on, and if you expect those needs to change significantly over time. Bakfietsen and longtails are great for transporting kids and groceries, but the bakfiets may not be a practical choice unless you have dedicated cycling infra-

structure where you're able to take up space on the road. If you don't, a mid or longtail might be a better choice. Trikes are a great option for businesses as they can be easily retrofitted to suit your particular needs, but unless you need refrigeration capabilities, a bench seat, or some serious hauling capacity, you may be okay with a less expensive bakfiets or even a cycle truck. Take the time to consider the size, shape, and weatherresistance of your expected cargo, and don't be afraid to ask questions at your bike shop or of other cargo bike commuters before you make your choice.

Storage

Storage is a big one for cargo bikes, which are both heavy and attractive to thieves. Box bikes

and trikes cannot be lifted by one person or regularly carried down stairs, so you'll need a secure, groundfloor storage option to consider those types of bike. Even longtails are quite heavy, and carrying them up more than a couple stairs will get very tiresome very quickly. When considering any cargo bike, ensure you have an accessible, secure, dry place to store it so it lasts as long as it's designed to.

Maintenance & Breakdowns

Routine or emergency maintenance isn't as straightforward with cargo bikes as it is with normal bicycles. Many cargo bikes feature unique steering linkages, long chains or internal hubs that make

home care difficult for non-mechanics, and emergency roadside repair nearly impossible. Expect to spend a bit of extra time understanding how your bike works, and a bit more money than usual in maintenance if you're used to doing your own work. With some cargo bikes, replacing a flat at the roadside can be prohibitively difficult, so have a backup plan such as a phone number for a local hauling agency in case you run into trouble.

Electric Assist

Electric Assist cargo bikes do tend to produce a bit of a shudder when you first see the price tag. But if you live in a hilly area or regularly travel with a lot of gear, the e-assist could be the difference between whether you adopt cargo biking into your regular routine, or relegate the thing to a life collecting dust in the garage as a brief but failed experiment. Once you decide on e-assist, you can look at your options. Some elec-

tric cargo bikes only have pedal assist, while others also have a throttle. If you frequently get stopped at a busy intersection halfway up the hill to your house, going the throttle route might be the best way to get what you need out of the upgrade.

Price

Know that you're going to spend between \$1,200 – \$6,000 USD. If you budget \$2,500 USD for the bike, you'll have a good range to choose from and will be able to find something that fits your needs. Budget an additional \$150 – \$300 USD for rain covers and fenders if you want to equip your bike for we weather.

Accessories

Since you paid a pretty penny for the bike, the last thing you want is for it to get stolen. Having a secure lock is a must. Large, flexible locks such as the Abus Bordo Granit X-Plus 6500 or the OnGuard

8020 are able to get around the frame of the bike while maintaining some serious anti-theft capability. A frame lock as a secondary lock would be a wise investment as well.

Nearly every cargo bike comes with a kickstand, but make sure your choice has a double kickstand or the option to upgrade to one, and get the upgrade. If it's loaded with a cargo on a single kickstand, you can bet it's going to fall over.

Availability

Wide distribution of cargo bikes at independent retailers in North America is nascent. Yuba is the most widely available cargo bike on the continent, but don't discount any of the other brands simply because they're not in your local shop. Shop around online and make your choice, then check with the company to see if they could deliver the bike for assembly at your local bike shop.



The Family Cargo Bike Lifestyle

WRITTEN BY **HILARY ANGUS** + PHOTO BY **GWENDAL CASTELLAN**

Cargo bikes are expensive, and the price can understandably be a deterrent for anyone considering purchasing one. But just as many people buy a bicycle instead of a bus pass, cargo bikes should be viewed not as a hobby or a luxury, but as a transportation lifestyle choice that replaces the need for a family vehicle.

“It’s a real commitment to buy a cargo bike, but I don’t think they are too expensive,” says Tania Lo who, together with her husband and two young children, has been cargo biking since 2008. “I just think that kind of investment takes some serious commitment, but in the long run is worth it if you are a car light family.”

Lo and her husband Gwendal each use cargo bikes to ferry materials to and from their respective jobs, and their two children, now aged 4 and 6 years old, have been

riding around in them since each was six weeks old. Weekend trips to the beach, grocery runs to the farmer’s market, transporting the kids to activities, and even the odd bike camping trip are all done on two wheels.

As for how the kids feel about it? “They love it!” Lo exclaims. “They get to yammer on and sing and take in the sights. It’s great for having conversations with them en route through the city, and they can also fall asleep and snack...And now the kids see that biking and walking is 90% of the way we get around. It just changes their experience that they will build on in the future.”

Like anything, cargo biking with kids is not without its challenges. Now that the kids are getting too big to both fit on one bike, but too small to ride solo for long distances, Lo and Castellan are sometimes left with the task of pedaling home a

kid and their bicycle. Storage can be an issue, and Lo admits to missing the occasional ability to be lazy. “On those rainy days I wish I had a car for a second, and then I remind myself how ridiculous that is, considering I’m only taking them 3 blocks to be dropped off at daycare or the school bus.”

On occasions they do need a car, such as heading up the mountains for a hike or transporting unwieldy objects, Lo and Castellan just grab a co-op car from the local car share.

Even with the price tag, Lo is adamant that the benefits of cargo biking far outweigh any of its inconveniences. “The fact that you can go anywhere and get rockstar parking...And I love that people are always smiling at you when pass them on a cargo bike,” she says. “The things you can do with a cargo bike are endless.”

Bike Friday

Offers the Haul-a-Day

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Forty years ago, Alan Scholz built a simple child bicycle trailer, the Burley, with the aim of enabling more people to gain the many benefits of an active family lifestyle. They had grown up on bikes, and wanted to share their passion with the wider community.

Building on the success of the Burley trailer, brother Hanz Scholz joined Alan to continue to innovate new ways to integrate bicycling into their lives and the lives of those around them. With that, Bike Friday was born. Bike Friday is driven by a vision of a healthy, connected world. One that sees the power inherent in every person, and the enormous potential that lies in a simple, elegant, and wholly remarkable machine: the bicycle.

Twenty-three years later, Hanna Scholz (the original Burley trailer baby) is leading the company for the next generation. Guided by the same founding principles of a commitment to community health and a human scale lifestyle, the good folks at Bike Friday make

bicycles to build a healthier world.

All of the Bike Friday bikes are built by hand in their factory in Eugene, Oregon. They are fit to the size, shape, and lifestyle of each individual customer, because a bike that fits is a bike that will be ridden every day.

The Scholz family has designed a number of high performance bikes, including a Pocket bike series, the Family Tandem, and the Tikit. Their flagship model, the Haul-a-Day, is the lightest cargo bike on the market, at just 33 lbs (15kg). The frame adjusts to fit riders 4' to 6'7", and has a rider limit of 220 lbs (100 kg) with a 200 lb (90 kg) cargo limit, with a heavier load upgrade

available. It can be custom-built with a choice of 14 colors, gears from 8-72 speeds, a range of handlebars, and other options. Unlike most cargo bikes, the Haul-a-Day can be broken down into three pieces for travel and fits on many vehicle transport racks.

The Bike Friday team passionately supports the growth of sustainable communities and healthy lifestyles, and actively supports that mission through the development of well-fitting, versatile and high performance bicycles for conscious human-scale lifestyles.

To learn more, call **1-800-777-0258**

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