

PRICE
£1,495

STANFORTH Kibo

Don't be fooled by the vintage looks, the Stanforth Kibo might have a retro influence but it's a thoroughly top-class 21st Century flat-bar adventure bike

Stanforth Bikes is a young British bike company started by Simon Stanforth, who has a particularly interesting story. Way back in the depths of the 1980s, Simon's dad and uncle ran Saracen bikes, one of the first companies to bring mass-produced mountain bikes to the British public. Saracen's early coup was to supply bikes to adventuring cousins Richard and Nicholas Crane as they cycled up Mount Kilimanjaro. This left an impression on the young Simon, and the Kibo is his tribute to the machines used by the Cranes back in 1985.

Each Stanforth Kibo is constructed in the UK by respected British bike builder Lee Cooper using Reynolds 631 steel tubing. And it looks superb. The tubes are joined with very pretty lugs, and it's fun to see some old-school steel forks, too. The fact Stanforth can supply a fully built bike with this frame, for less than £1,500 is hugely impressive.

Mountain man

Unlike typical British tourers, the Kibo comes with flat bars, although it's worth pointing out that three other touring brands — Thorn, Oxford Bike Works and Spa Cycles — all feature similar bikes in their catalogues, so it's by no means unique. I'd love to see what it would look like with a set of drops on it, though.

Elsewhere the spec is very sensible. The gearset is a mixture of Shimano Deore at the front and XT rear mech. Gear changes feel super secure, and the smallest of the triple chainrings allied with the 34t biggest sprocket would make even the least fit rider feel able to climb Kilimanjaro.

Also helping matters are SunRace thumb shifters, especially the one operating the front derailleur. This is friction only, meaning you can feather the mech and completely avoid chain rub. As for brakes, we had Tektro cantilevers, and despite their old-school

looks, they offered far more reliable braking than some mechanical disc set-ups. Sturdy Rigida Sputnik rims on equally reliable Shimano Deore hubs offer a very strong set of wheels, particularly as these are 26in. Stanforth offers the Kibo with a choice of tyres — we fitted Schwalbe Marathon Mondials and they coped with road and moderate mixed surfaces very well.

Into the gloop

On asphalt, and especially on road climbs, the Kibo suffers just a little for a couple of reasons. First, those smaller wheels can't maintain momentum quite as well as a 700c bike, and road riders will want to reach for the brake hoods to really manhandle the bike upwards.

However, get onto paths, tracks and hard-pack trails, and the super-compliant steel frame and lively 26in wheels come into their own, hopping and skipping over bumps and bobbles. In all situations and on any surface it's a very comfortable bike to ride, yet it's also very exciting.

So it's a great adventure touring bike, but anyone who had an mtb back in the late 1980s will find the Kibo inspiring all kinds of other thoughts, too. We couldn't help taking it deep off-road into gloop and roots territory. Despite having the wrong rubber fitted, pumped to far too high a pressure, we all survived the slipping and sliding. Best of all, we came out grinning, too. **END**

VERDICT

COMFORT
★★★★★
VALUE
★★★★★
HANDLING
★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★

OVERALL RATING...

★★★★★

As an adventure bike the Kibo is hard to beat. There's no getting away from the fact that its unique inspiration has had a bearing on its performance. But while the steel frame, thumb shifters and canti brakes might not seem modern, they do offer 21st century performance.

“Get onto paths, tracks and hard-pack trails, and the super-compliant steel frame comes into its own”



The Kibo's high-quality ingredients begin with Reynolds 631 tubing



The Brooks B17 saddle is a classic touring perch



Tektro cantis look old-school but work well



Thumb shifters help keep the potential for gearing disasters to a minimum

SPECIFICATION

Frame: Reynolds 631 chromoly steel, hand built in UK

Fork: Chromoly steel

Gears: Shimano Deore (front mech) and XT (rear) 9-speed, 11-34t

Chainset: Shimano Deore triple

Brakes: Tektro cantilever

Wheels: Rigida Sputnik 26in rims on Shimano Deore hubs

Tyres: Schwalbe Marathon Mondial 2.0in

Bar: 62cm aluminium riser bars

Stem: Nitto FU82 aluminium quill stem

Saddle: Brooks B17

Seatpost: Aluminium

Size range: 19, 21, 22, 23in (bespoke available at extra cost)

Size tested: 23in

Weight: 13.3kg / 29.3lb

stanforthbikes.co.uk