

The Perfect Road Bike for Every Budget

In the world of cycling, the **RIDE OF YOUR LIFE** can cost as little as a grand — or much, much more.

LIFT A FEATHERWEIGHT BIKE FRAME WITH A finger and you'll ooh and aah. But unless you've got deep pockets, that fascination will dwindle the moment you see the price tag. Materials, components, and craftsmanship dictate sticker shock,

and in the last few years we've watched manufacturers race to roll out their latest Tour de France-ready carbon-fiber wonderbikes, many fetching upward of \$10,000. For the rest of us there's steel and aluminum, which often provide greater value. Each

frame material has unique advantages and disadvantages, and makes its own cycling-culture statement. To help us understand the spectrum, four cyclists, ranging from novice to seasoned racer, put more than 2,000 miles on the six bicycles we recommend here.

The \$1,000 Bike

NOVARA Divano

Entry-level riders will grow into cyclists with the 22-lb Divano. Its aluminum frame isn't exotic, but you'll thank the short top tube for not screwing your back on longer rides, and the carbon fork for smoothing the ride. Best of all, you can afford to buy that sexy Lycra-clad female cyclist a few vanilla lattes with all the dough you saved. [[\\$899; rei.com](#)]

RATING: ★★★

GEARING

The triple-chain ring allows beginners to climb hills with lower gears.



FORK
Columbus's carbon-fiber fork helps tame aluminum's sometimes-harsh ride.

COMPONENTS
Shimano's Tiagra system integrates shifters and brake levers and still keeps the price down.

The \$7,000 Bike

SPECIALIZED S-Works Roubaix SL

Rarely do comfort, looks, and race-tier performance meet in one bicycle. Named in honor of a 160-mile single-day French race, the 15.4-lb Roubaix SL shines as a testament to durability and endurance. "Put simply," said a tester, "this bike eats miles as if they were bites of filet mignon." No wonder: Its sole purpose is to transfer every ounce of power to the wheels. [[\\$7,100; specialized.com](#)] **RATING:** ★★★★★

WHEELS

The carbon hoops weigh in at a ridiculously light 1,540 grams per pair.



FRAME GEOMETRY
The Roubaix is both vertically compliant and torsionally rigid — cycling speak for a comfortable yet stiff ride.

COMPONENTS
The shifters on SRAM's Force package have two positions; a light tap on them upshifts, or push them farther to downshift.

Pick Your Material

The dominant factor in a bicycle's price is its frame. More expensive models weigh less, yet still provide a smooth ride.



- ALUMINUM** Transfers energy efficiently, but can feel "stiff."
- TITANIUM** Incredibly strong yet weighs almost nothing. Hardest to find.
- STEEL** Tubes are narrow and strong, but heavy; purists prefer its road feel.
- CARBON FIBER** Highest strength-to-weight ratio; provides silkiest ride.

The \$1,500 Bike

LEMOND Sarthe

The most retro of the group, the Sarthe will make you feel like a traditionalist. At 19 lbs, it's on the heftier side, but most cyclists won't notice because its steel frame smooths the ride. And the Shimano Ultegra shifters, derailleur, and vibration-absorbing carbon-fiber fork? Gravy. [[\\$1,650; lemondbikes.com](#)]

RATING: ★★★



The \$2,000 Bike

GIANT OCR A0

Giant innovatively wove swatches of carbon fiber into this aluminum frame to shave off weight and dampen vibrations. The 19-lb bike's geometry places the rider in a more upright and comfortable position than superhigh-performance road bikes, yet the bike handles deftly with slick Ultegra components. [[\\$2,000; giantbicycles.com](#)]

RATING: ★★★



The \$3,500 Bike

BMC SL01

On high-speed turns the SL01 feels as if it's on rails. Credit the rear triangle, made of a proprietary carbon fiber, and the frame's triple-butted aluminum mainframe, which adds stiffness. Given the excellent strength-to-weight ratio and the top-end components (Shimano's Dura-Ace), any racer will sweat this 17.4-lb bike. [[\\$3,500; bmc-cycling.com](#)]

RATING: ★★★★★



The \$5,000 Bike

MOOTS Vamoots

The most striking quality of the Vamoots is not its light weight (17 lbs), but the sturdiness of the ride relative to that. When standing on the pedals or bombing a descent, the titanium frame instills confidence. But it's up hills that you experience the bike's true beauty: Ticking out pedal revolutions is shamefully easy. [[\\$5,000; moots.com](#)]

RATING: ★★★★★



BIKES: MICHAEL PIRROCCO AND ROBERT BUCKLEY