



Cycling can be a fun recreational activity or means of transport for the entire family. There is equipment available for cycling with children of just about any age,

from 1 year old and upward. Most children will enjoy cycling, as long as you keep the journeys to a reasonable length and provide interesting destinations or activities for the kids when you are stopped. Child seats are a good option for many people wishing to cycle with children.

If you are not a competent cyclist yourself, Bike North would recommend practicing to attain a level of cycling competency prior to cycling with a child in a seat.

Child seats vary in price but you should be able to get one of reasonable quality for about \$140 (including rack). The seat should be comfortably moulded, with a good, easily adjusted harness system. The seat should include foot rests and restraints to prevent the child's foot from becoming entangled in the rear wheel of the bike. Some seats also have a small amount of storage capacity built into the seat itself. This can be handy for storing tools, keys, money etc. Some seats incorporate a handlebar in front of the child. A slightly reclined position is possible on some seats allowing children to sleep more easily.

When buying a seat you should also consider how easy it is to remove the seat from the rear rack, for times when it is not needed. If you will be using the seat on more than one bike you should consider whether it is possible to purchase additional racks to go with the seat. Most seats come with their own purpose built rack. A few seats specify a particular type of rack for use with the seat. An important consideration is the functionality of the rack that comes with the seat (or is specified for use with the seat) for fitting panniers and load carrying at times when the seat is not being used.

**Relative advantages of child seats compared to trailers:**

- Considerably cheaper than a trailer.
- Lighter and faster than a trailer. It is possible for one adult to carry a bike with seat attached (not so for a trailer)

- More maneuverable than a trailer for getting through obstacles and dodging potholes.
- Easier to store and transport than a trailer.
- Child is physically closer to person riding the bike and communication can be easier with both the parent/rider and other cyclists making the cycling experience more enjoyable.
- Better view from the seat than trailer.

**Relative Disadvantages of Child Seats Compared to Trailers:**

- Reduced luggage capacity on the bike (this can be avoided by the use of front panniers which also provide better weight distribution, see photo).
- Greater impact on the bikes handling and stability.
- Only able to transport one child at a time.
- Child seats do not offer the rollover protection provided by a trailer. Trailers will remain upright if the bike goes down (although like all cycling, cycling with a child on a child seat is a relatively safe activity).
- The level of protection from the weather (sun, wind and rain) is not as good as that of a trailer.



Typical child seat, front panniers used to enhance luggage carrying capacity.