



Cycling can be an enjoyable recreational activity or means of transport for the entire family. Equipment is available for cycling with children of just

about any age, from one year old 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. Trailer bikes are an economical option available for people wishing to cycle with children aged from about 4 ½ years old to 10 years old.

If you are not a competent cyclist yourself, Bike North recommends practising to attain a level of cycling competency prior to cycling with a child on a trailer bike.

Trailer bikes, also known as tag-alongs, have become widely available from local bicycle shops in Sydney, and typically cost \$300-\$500. Folding versions are much easier to transport in the boot of a car. Versions with gears (usually 6) are recommended if you anticipate riding with older children in hilly terrain.

Trailer bikes usually attach via an articulated hitch to the back of an adult's road or mountain bike, and have pedals for the child to drive their



wheel. Alternatively the better models attach to a special hinge post mounted directly over the rear axle, which gives better handling. With a trailer bike, the child's pedalling is independent of the adult. They can pedal when they want, and stop when they want. Trailer bikes have quick release systems enabling easy detachment.

It may take the adult a few rides to get used to the feeling of riding with a trailer bike. A feeling of instability and some wobbles are normal in the first ride, but after a few rides, most people feel quite "at home", and sufficiently stable with a trailer bike.

The trailer bike is generally greatly enjoyed by children from the outset. By age 6 the child's

contribution can be very significant, pedaling most of the time, and sprinting to help up hills. Whilst not as fast as the adult on a solo bike, trailer bikes still travel at a good pace. They can be used for rides of up to 100km in a day if desired, although most will prefer shorter rides.

Trailer bikes have a few degrees of loose play at the hitch – some are better than others, but play increases with use. One with too much loose play is harder to balance, so don't buy one that flops a lot from side to side when new. It helps to keep the seat-post attachment nice and tight.

Relative advantages of trailer bikes compared to tandems:

- Considerably Cheaper
- Child can freewheel and rest when tired on a trailer bike.
- Child is further back, so gets a better view
- Child learns to operate gears
- Easier to transport by car, and to store at home.
- More versatile - easy to convert to solo bike whenever desired, and back again

Relative disadvantages of trailer-bikes compared to tandems:

- Slower and less stable.
- Child may not pedal when they should/could
- Maximum age of child for trailer bike around 10, whilst tandems are usable for teenagers
- Small adult bikes may require removal of rear rack.
- Less protected from rain than on a tandem
- Communication not as good as on tandem, due to greater separation

