

# The **ULTIMATE** Commuter Bike

**T**here are many good reasons to consider commuting by bicycle: It is great exercise, saves money and is benign toward the environment.

It also can be a relaxing, convenient, and rapid way to get from Point A to Point B — assuming you don't get a flat

tire, arrive at your destination without grimy hands or chain marks on your leg, and can carry more than a Snickers bar and a stick of chewing gum.

Fortunately, with a little ingenuity and modest dollar investment, those bicycle-related worries can be a thing of the

past. Below are some elements that can comprise the Ultimate Commuter Bike. (All items below can be purchased from any bicycle shop except where noted

— Felix Wong for *NextNC*

## tires \$25-\$40

Most cyclists have experienced the sinking feeling of hearing a hissing sound followed by a "thump, thump" while riding along. Yes, the dreaded flat tire. Fortunately, the frequency of this nuisance can be minimized.

Some bicyclists swear by kevlar-belted tires, thorn-resistant tubes and slime-like sealant that one injects into a tube — all effective solutions. My personal preference for commuting, however, is airless tires. In addition to eliminating the possibility of getting a flat, you never have to pump them up as they do not require any air. Modern airless tires are only marginally slower and harsher-riding than their pneumatic counterparts and carry little to no weight penalty, especially because they obviate the need to carry spare tubes, a pump and tire-changing tubes.

(\$25-\$40 from [AirFreeTires.com](http://AirFreeTires.com) or [Nu-Teck.com](http://Nu-Teck.com).)

## rack/panniers

A rack and panniers afford greater carrying capacity than a backpack that is bound to be uncomfortable, especially on hot days. Seat post-mounted racks do not require frame eyelets and can be used with virtually any bicycle. Rack: (\$20-40) Panniers: (\$20-60)

## lights \$10-\$30

If you are commuting before sunrise or after the sun sets, you want to be able to see where you are going and be spotted by motorists. LED bicycle lights are bright, inexpensive and have burn times of 15-30 hours (front) or 75-150 hours (rear) on AA batteries. (\$10-\$30)

## chain

A greasy chain that leaves black streaks on your trousers will wreak havoc on your laundry bill. It is best to thoroughly clean the chain and use wax-based lubricants such as White Lightning or Pedro's Ice Wax, which do a better job at keeping the chain grime-free than petroleum-based lubes. An even better solution — but more time-consuming — is the traditional hot-wax treatment, which entails removing and cleaning the chain, melting candle wax in a double boiler, and immersing the chain in the hot wax. Assuming the weather remains dry, this treatment will last hundreds of miles.

(\$1 for a good-sized candle from a supermarket.)

## lock \$15-\$25

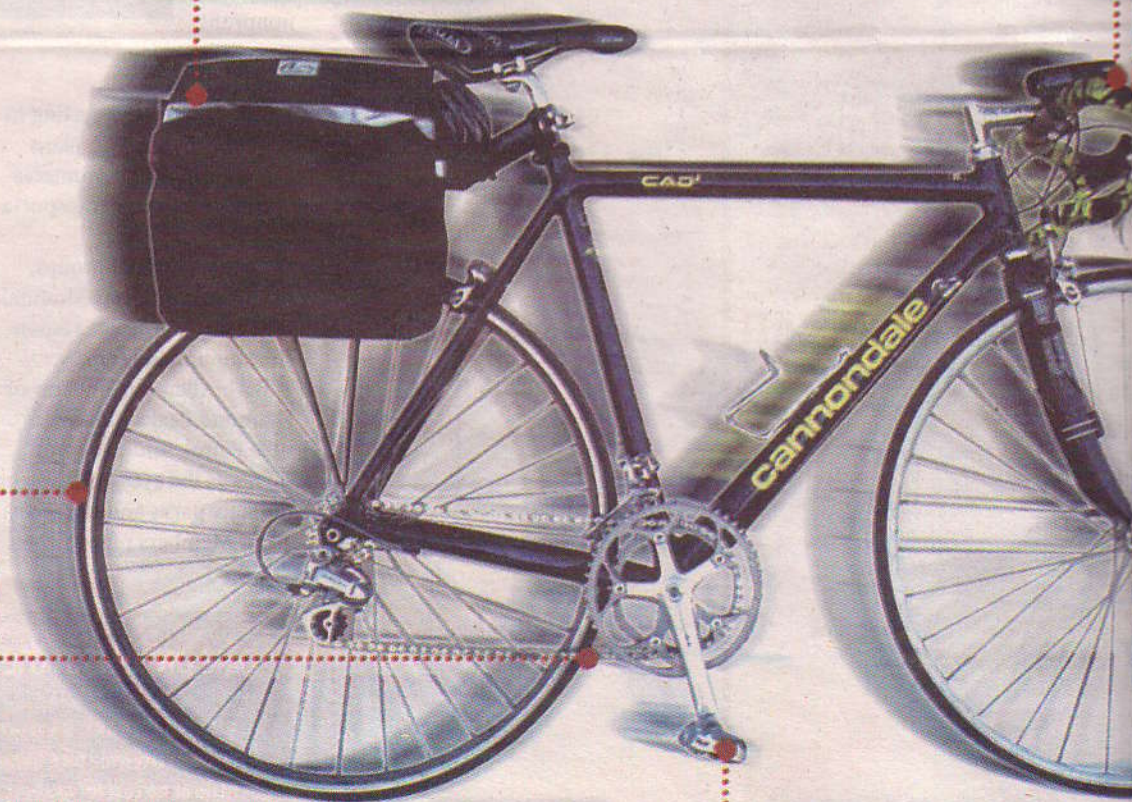
A combination cable lock is lightweight and versatile and does not require remembering to bring a key. A U-lock may be desired for higher-security situations.

## pedals \$30-\$50

Clipless platform pedals have a flat platform for use with street shoes on one side, and a clipless mechanism that is compatible with cleated cycling shoes on the other. The latter allows one to pull up on each pedal stroke in addition to pushing down, making for a more rapid commute.

## fenders \$15-\$30 (not shown)

For wet commutes, fenders keep mud from being sprayed onto the tires. Fortunately, in northern states where sunshine is the norm, they are optional.



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## handlebars

Drop handlebars afford a more aerodynamic posture and more hand positions than a flat handlebar. This results in greater speed and comfort. (Standard on road bikes.)



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For wet commutes, fenders help prevent mud from being sprayed onto your clothes by the tires. Fortunately, in northern Colorado, where sunshine is the norm, these are mostly optional.

Information compiled by Felix Wong for NEXTnc. Graphic by Sandra Machuca, smachuca@nextnc.com