

Kogswell Randonneur/Porteur

A Modern All-Rounder

You're a serious cyclist. You probably commute. And you probably do a lot of recreational riding on weekends. Your friends turn to you for bicycle advice. Our friends do. And the one question we get all the time is, 'What bike should I buy?'

The answer, of course, is that no one bike fits everyone's needs. But we think the Randonneur/Porteur has broad appeal. So as you read this, ask yourself:

Is it possible for one bike to be a courier, a utility bike, a grocery getter and a long distance randoneering machine?

Background

In early 2005 we stumbled onto a web page published by Joel Metz. Joel's **blackbirdsf.org** web site is brimming with all things bicycle. But one bike, one type of bike, caught our eye: those used by Parisian couriers. They are the so-called 'Porteurs', named after the men and women who used them.

One look at a Porteur and all of the tumblers fell into place. The doorways to understanding swung open. We had been looking for a way to reintroduce a bike with **real** 26 inch tires back into the American market. And the rugged, comfortable Porteurs were exactly what we wanted. 

In the early summer of 2005 we approached Jan Heine and asked him to help us design a Porteur. We felt that Jan was particularly well suited to the job of designing such a bike. He knows Porteurs well and he understands the nuance of French design. Jan took up the challenge and told us that he would design it to be fast and fun too. As we traded emails and chatted on the phone, we came to understand something that Jan already understood very well: the top French bicycle designers of the mid twentieth century had solved many of the mysteries of bicycle handling by the only sensible approach - trial and error. So what had started off as a simple utility bike was blossoming into something a lot more interesting.

To say that this is a replica of a Porteur bike is not exactly correct. We're using the geometry of those vintage bikes; a geometry that Jan lifted straight from his 1950's Herse randoneering bike. And we're adding a lot of the features that made the Porteur bikes comfortable and practical. But we're using modern materials, modern fabrication and modern components to make them reliable and affordable.

How cool is that? An affordable bike with proven French geometry and features.

By late summer Jan had a set of dimensions ready. And he surprised us with a bit of geometric good fortune: the only difference between the Porteur bike and a good Randonneur's bike was the fork offset. So he asked us to supply the bike with three different fork geometries which would allow the owner to configure the bike for many different roles. With a simple change of fork, a city bike could be made into a long distance touring bike.

Sample frames and samples of forks with three different offsets were produced. And then in tribute to the man who had done the real engineering of this bike, Rene Herse, Jan suggested that we test all the fork geometries thoroughly to be sure that we had gotten them right. So road test were performed and the results were fed back into the production specs.

Along the way, members of the Kogswell Owners Group were asked to provide input about feature sets and other design issues. This proved to be an especially good way to design a bike. Lots of ideas were discussed and the good ones went straight onto the blueprint.

The result is a bike that's destined to be a modern classic. Everyone who has ridden it has been very happy.

There's more to this story and we'll cover it here in the weeks ahead. We just wanted to explain it a bit and list the hard facts now. Please stay tuned.

Features

- ECO brand, double butted steel frame, butted fork blades and stays
- TIG welded construction
- Brazed fork built w/ a Long Shen LC42 crown
- steel fenders, painted to match, included with the frame
- threaded fender mounts for easy, secure fender attachment
- sized for 650B wheels
- dual water bottle braze-ons and a pump peg behind the head tube

Dimensions

Sizes

Seat Tube (mm)	510	536	563	590	616
Top Tube (mm)	510	525	545	570	600
Standover w/ 650B tires (in)	28.1	29.2	30.2	31.3	32.3

Build Dimensions

seat post	27.2mm
seat post clamp	29.8mm
BB	68mm, English
front derailleur	28.6mm, clamp-on, bottom pull
fork	1 1/8" threadless Ahead
rear spacing	135mm
brakes	standard cantilever posts for cantis or V-brakes
cabling	D/T shifter bosses

