

Extrawheel Voyager Trailer



The Extrawheel Voyager trailer is an aptly-named appendage for your bicycle—unlike other trailers that have a bed with one or two small wheels to support it, the Voyager is essentially a full-size wheel (either 26" or 700c) enclosed in a steel frame that carries a set of panniers. The "Voyager" part of the name fits with this trailer's ability to traverse rough surfaces. A look at the photo gallery on this Polish company's website shows that the trailers have indeed traveled far and wide.

The \$259 Voyager attaches to your bike's rear wheel (which can also be either 26" or 700c size) via a horizontal double "fork" of squared high-tensile steel; at the fork tips are shallow sockets that fit onto a special quick-release skewer with rounded ends. The fork is simply held on with spring tension—no secondary attachment is provided. Two pinch bolts allow the fork arms to be adjusted for road- or mountain bike-width rear ends. Frankly, the attachment looks sketchy, but it has held the trailer fast through all kinds of conditions. It only popped loose once was when I was walking my bike over a pile of rocks, and the trailer got thoroughly stuck as I stumbled and yanked the bike sideways.

Two pannier styles, both in nice eye-catching black and yellow, are offered by Extrawheel: the \$99 Dry—simple roll-top style bags made of PVC-coated nylon with

60-liter capacity, and the \$179 Expert—made of PVC-lined Cordura with 80-liter capacity (and more pockets). I tested the Dry panniers. They held a decent grocery load, all of my commuting needs, or a good portion of gear for an overnight trip, and kept it dry and safe. Their shape and roll-top closure worked better for stuffing things in randomly, but not as well for protecting easily bruised fruit. Any type of pannier can be used on the Voyager frame, so one could opt for a more rectangular, grocery-bag style.

The Voyager set-up is fairly light compared to other trailers. The trailer portion weighs 8.6lbs. and the Dry bags add 3.6lbs., for a total of 12.2lbs. Total capacity is 66lbs. (30kg), a number that is difficult to arrive at with normal loads. I might have come close on a couple trips to the farmer's market. The Voyager's frame incorporates a fender, which I appreciated on wet days, and it includes a safety flag for visibility.

This trailer was easy to pull. Its large wheel allowed it to roll smoothly over curbs and potholes, and its short length lent maneuverability in traffic or off-road tight spots. Since the weight is mostly carried by the trailer wheel, and not the bike's rear wheel, it doesn't affect handling as much. If one wanted to do a tour on a soft surface, such as a fine-gravel rail trail after a lot of rain, having the weight

of your load spread over three wheels rather than two can help keep the tires from sinking in. It's definitely the most agile trailer I've used. One drawback was the flexibility of the steel frame—if I tried to stand up to pedal hard while carrying a significant load, the trailer forks would flex and give some wacky feedback. As long as I stayed seated and shifted down to go uphill, it felt fine.

One of the claimed benefits of the Voyager is that for truly out-there tours, you've got an extra wheel, literally, to use in case your bike wheel gets damaged. Apparently the trailer can handle a bent rim much better than a bike. One big caveat with this benefit is that it'll only work easily if it's your front wheel that gets toasted—back wheel, you'd have to un-lace the spare rim and re-lace it onto the rear hub, at which point you'd probably be better off hitching a camel ride or other conveyance. If you do opt to use your own matching wheel, the Voyager can be ordered without a wheel for \$209.

Extrawheel trailers are available in the U.S. exclusively through BikeTrailerShop.com. They carry a one-year warranty and are made in Poland. www.extrawheel.com —Karen Brooks