



## CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 27

# It's amazing how much you can carry on a bike

We have all seen those third world documentaries showing the locals transporting seemingly impossible loads on their bicycles. You see them balancing small car bodies, large pieces of furniture, coops full of chickens – in fact just about anything that can be strapped on.

Although our traffic regulations place restrictions on the size of such loads, it is still surprising how much can be carried on a standard bike in WA.

Legislation states that the overall width of a load carried on a bicycle must not exceed 660mm and that any load or attachment must not be likely to cause injury to the rider or any other person. That probably excludes the chicken coop, but it still leaves plenty of scope to transport a considerable amount of cargo, particularly if it is carefully stored.

Riders have several carrying options to choose from. Baskets come in a variety of sizes and styles, often attaching directly to the handlebars or via a mounting bracket. Front baskets are best for light items as a heavy load can affect steering.

Some bike baskets can be detached and carried into a store to hold shopping.

Racks create a flat surface over the rear wheel that can then be used to strap or secure a load on top. A downside is that most racks have a strong spring-loaded gripping mechanism that may damage soft or fragile goods.

Different style racks have been developed depending upon whether the bicycle has rim or disc brakes. Special side racks to hold long flat objects such as surfboards attach to the seat stem.

Panniers look a bit like saddlebags that hang down either side of the front or rear wheel and are attached to a rack.

Usually sold in pairs, they are ideal for touring cyclists or weekly shopping trips because of their large carrying capacity – up to 10kg in the front bags and 15kg in the rear bags – and when properly loaded, they have a low centre of gravity providing good stability.

The load should be even on both sides of the bike. If you have front and rear panniers, arrange items so that about 60% of the weight is in the back pair and 40% in the front pair. If you have big feet, make sure there is enough heel clearance when pedalling with a fully loaded rear pannier.

A pannier without adequate stiffness in the back may flap into the rear wheel. Some racks have an additional dog-leg strut to prevent this. Underseat bags that attach to the frame tubes give additional carrying capacity.

Whether using panniers, racks or baskets, always check that they do not obstruct the reflectors, lights, bell or pedals and, depending on the load weight, you may need to pump up your tyres to reduce drag.



***This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. You can find more cycling fact sheets online at [www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling)***

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