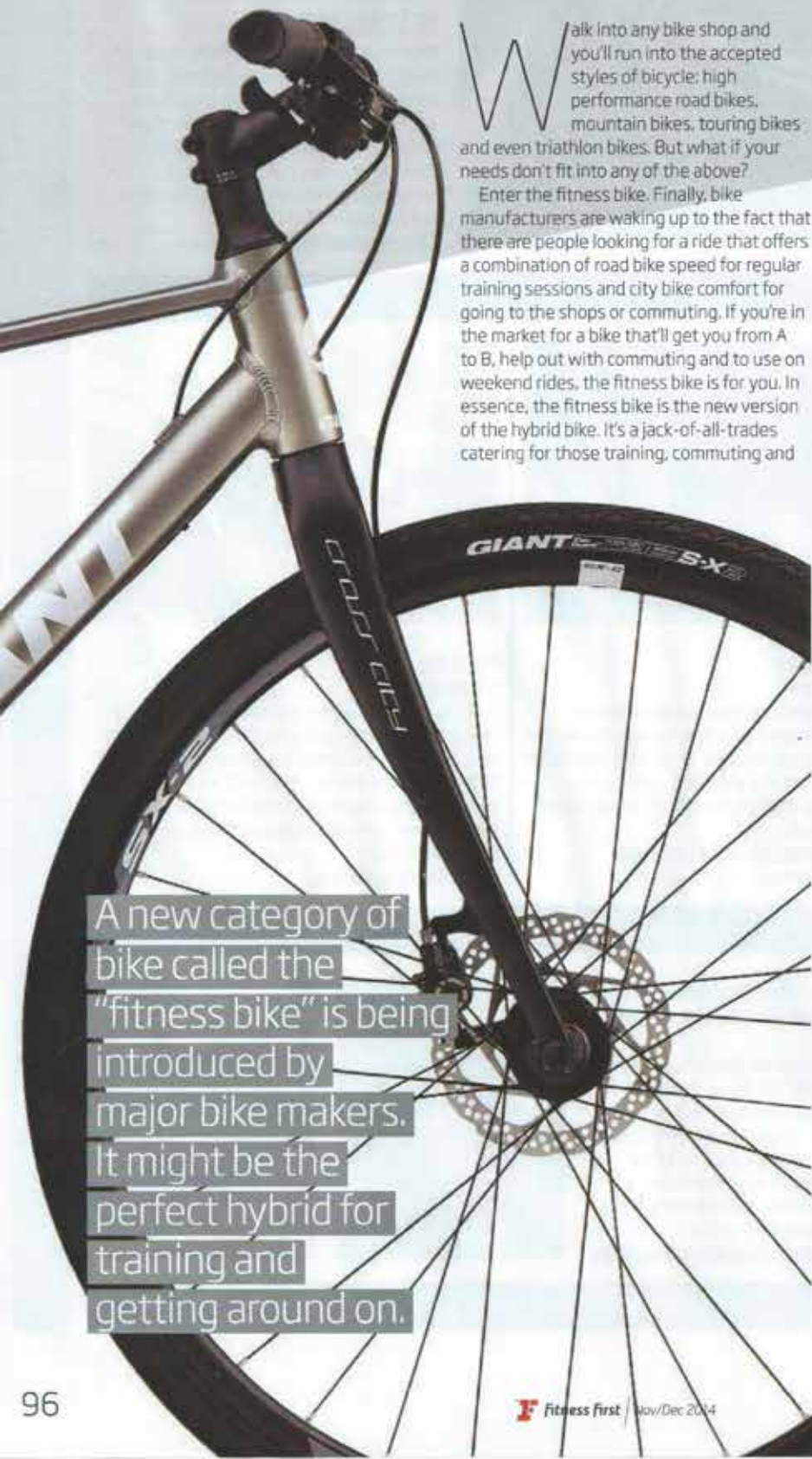


# THE FITNESS BIKE



Walk into any bike shop and you'll run into the accepted styles of bicycle: high performance road bikes, mountain bikes, touring bikes and even triathlon bikes. But what if your needs don't fit into any of the above? Enter the fitness bike. Finally, bike manufacturers are waking up to the fact that there are people looking for a ride that offers a combination of road bike speed for regular training sessions and city bike comfort for going to the shops or commuting. If you're in the market for a bike that'll get you from A to B, help out with commuting and to use on weekend rides, the fitness bike is for you. In essence, the fitness bike is the new version of the hybrid bike. It's a jack-of-all-trades catering for those training, commuting and

going on lazy weekend rides. Bike manufacturer Trek says that the fitness bikes are turning into its most popular bike category because people want something they can use for everything. These bikes tend to have a lightweight frame, components and wheels for efficiency over long rides. The wheels are the same diameter as those of a road bike and have less tread than those of a mountain bike, to reduce rolling resistance. But their exceptional versatility means these treadlies perform well on roads, crushed gravel and dirt trails, plus efficient riding position of the design means rides of 20km plus are quite comfortable.

### CHOOSING YOUR CHARIOT

Most bike brands now have a fitness bike category (sometimes also called hybrid or commuter bikes) in their range. They offer similar base features with some interesting extras thrown in.

**GIANT's** Men's Cross City range and the female equivalent, the Liv Thrive, are fast and sporty and work well for short daily spins and long road rides. The Cross City 2 Equipped comes with a bike rack and mudguards. The Cross City starts at \$499 to \$999 for the Cross City 0 Disc (pictured left) and the Thrive range starts at \$999 for the Disc 1 to the Thrive Comax 2 at \$1,599. [giant-bicycles.com](http://giant-bicycles.com)

The **AVANTI** Giro F is another player in the fitness bike scene, and again offers a women's specific design. The Giro F2 and F3 have a few extra gears than the lead-in model to help tackle any hills and have bar-ends so you can change hand positions for a more comfortable endurance ride. The Giro F3 has the added benefit of Shimano M395 hydraulic disc brakes so you won't be heard when conditions get wet. Prices start at \$529.95 for the Giro F1 and go up to \$729.95 for the Giro F2 and \$1,199.95 for the Giro F3. [avantibikes.com](http://avantibikes.com)

The **TREK FX** range offers the best of both worlds, and is the quintessential fitness bike. The FX is fast and agile, perfect for multiple uses and starts at a very affordable price, going up depending on

# BIKE



Giant Cross City 0 Disc



Merida Speeder T1 Silk



Avanti Giro F2



Trek FX7.4

features you select (some quite cool). Thanks to the carbon forks and IsoZone handlebar and grips, hand-numbing road vibrations and bumps are minimised and the puncture-resistant tyres reduce the likelihood of a flat keeping you from your workout. In case you need extra carting capacity or prefer to keep the mud off your clothes, it's also rack and mudguard ready.

What's really clever is the DuoTrap S, a Bluetooth sensor that's integrated into the frame (FX DuoTrap S range only) and allows you to log your routes and track your fitness progress on your computer or smartphone without an external sensor. It works with all the major ANT+ wireless technology players including Bontrager, Garmin, PowerTap and SRM. And, lets face it,

the bike looks good too, with no messy brake cables as they are routed through the frame. Prices start at \$479 for the 7.1 FX and head up to \$1,999 for the carbon frame 7.7 FX. The 7.4 Disc FX has hydraulic disc brakes for strong stopping power in all conditions. [trekbikes.com](http://trekbikes.com)

**MERIDA** has come up with the Speeder range of fitness bikes to suit a range of budgets, with the T1 series being a popular mid-range choice. What's handy is the frame measuring system that Merida employs if you go to a bike shop specialising in their range. A few quick measurements and they can match you up with the right frame size in a jiffy. Prices start at \$529 for the Speeder S1 up to \$849 for the Speeder T1, and \$1,449 for the Speeder T5. [merida.com.au](http://merida.com.au)



Giant Liv Thrive 1 Disc in Black



Avanti Giro



Merida Speeder T1 Juliet



Trek FX7.5

## BIKES FOR WOMEN

Should women buy a fitness bike made specifically for a woman's frame? The short answer is that it depends. Obviously women's bodies have different proportions than men's – a shorter torso and arms and longer legs – as well as differences in body shape, i.e. wider hips. Tweaking bike frame geometry and saddle design are some of the features that bike designers are addressing.

British Cycling's head physiotherapist, Phil Burt, says that saddle soreness is probably the number one complaint among women who cycle. Ask any newbie to an indoor cycle class and they'll tell you that their "bits" are rather sore. However, saddle choice is a personal thing and everyone's butts are as different as fingerprints, so you need to try a few to find the right one to suit. Old thinking had women pinned as needing a wider saddle than men, and this much is true as women's "sit bones" are further apart, but going too wide can cause chafing on the soft tissue of the inner thighs.

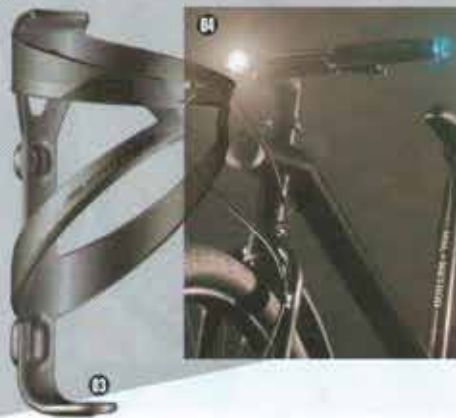
Saddles come in many designs, though research suggests that women tend to prefer anatomic saddles, the ones with a cutaway or hole carved out of the middle as these intend to relieve pressure. Some have an area at the nose with softer padding, or with the ability to flex more. If these don't suit, Burt recommends forked saddles by Adamo ([ismseatsaustralia.com](http://ismseatsaustralia.com)) because they have the cutaway as well as a noseless design that removes pressure from the soft tissue areas around the privates.

Trek has Women's Specific Design (WSD) bikes that are designed from the ground up with "women-friendly" features to improve the fit and feel from frame geometry to gearing. The Liv/Giant brand is doing wonderful things for female riders. The range includes bikes, clothing and accessories, and are designed and engineered by females using the 3F design philosophy – Fit, Form and Function. Features include optimised stem lengths, handlebar width and drop, crank arm length and shorter brake reach and, let's not forget, comfortable saddle design.

A new category of bike called the "fitness bike" is being introduced by major bike makers. It might be the perfect hybrid for training and getting around on.

# BIKE ACCESSORIES

Make your bike riding more enjoyable with these hot accessories.



## ESSENTIALS

### 1. MET Crossover helmet –

Combines the high performance and style of a sports helmet but also functions well in the urban environment. The detachable visor and built-in rear LED lights are bonuses. Helmets are available in a range of colours for \$74.99. [met-helmets.com](http://met-helmets.com)

### 2. Strongman U-Lock bike locks –

By Knog, this lock is so strong it can be used as a hook to lift a car with a crane. It's this kind of toughness that'll keep bike thieves away for a well spent \$109.95. [knog.com.au](http://knog.com.au)

### 3. Water bottle cages –

With all the pedalling, you'll need to stay hydrated. Grab a water bottle and, for easy access, attach a water bottle cage to the frame of your bike. Depending on your budget, cages range



from \$5 to over \$100. The Bontrager RL Cage (pictured) at \$19.95 has a secure bottle hold and a stylish look. Splurge on the RXL Carbon Cage for \$84.95. [bontrager.com](http://bontrager.com)

## FUN AND USEFUL

### 4. Helios Bars –

The handlebars with the lot have GPS tracking, built-in front and rear-facing LED lights. The rear-facing lights change colour according to your speed, and function as turn signals and indicators with the turn-by-turn navigation feature. The Helios Bars come in straight, bullhorn and drop bar styles and start at \$334 including postage. [ridehelios.com](http://ridehelios.com)

### 5. ICEdot Crash Sensor –

Safety comes first when you attach the ICEdot Crash Sensor to your helmet. Triggered by an accident, the Crash Sensor app starts a countdown, and if not disabled, GPS coordinates and alerts are sent to listed emergency contacts. Available for iPhone 4S and above and all android phones using OS 4.3 or higher except for Samsung phones. It's a small price to pay for safety at \$179. [icedot.com.au](http://icedot.com.au)

**6. MYBELL –** Ditch the bike bell for a MYBELL and let people know you're coming. The nifty computer can store two user-selected digital sound files and pre-selected

lighting patterns to match your mood. Set up two types of sounds, depending on where you're riding, such as an urgent warning sound like a truck horn and a friendlier one so you don't freak anyone out. Pre-order now. [mybell.co](http://mybell.co)

**7. Revolights –** Forget the standard bike lights and illuminate your path with Revolights. The rings of LEDs are mounted onto your wheels and give a 360-degree illumination, so you're visible from all sides. Currently only available for road and hybrid bikes with 27" wheels, a complete set will set you back US\$229, or one wheel, US\$139. [revolights.com](http://revolights.com)

## COOL AND CRAZY

**8. Foldable Plixi helmet –** We mention this to give you a sense of how clever bike accessories are getting overseas, even if you can't get this in Australia. This foldable helmet fits snugly into your bag. Sadly, although it's European safety certified it still doesn't meet Australia's stringent helmet safety laws, but expect to see something like it in the future. [overade.com](http://overade.com)

**9. Hövding –** Great for people living in places that don't require a helmet to be worn for cycling (I'm talking about you, Manly NSW). The inflatable helmet is a one-use wonder worn around the neck and uses sensors and algorithms to detect when a crash occurs to immediately inflate. It also comes with an external shell that can be changed to match your outfit, but unfortunately it's only available in Europe at this stage for a pricey \$550. [hovding.com](http://hovding.com)