



Surly Long Haul Trucker

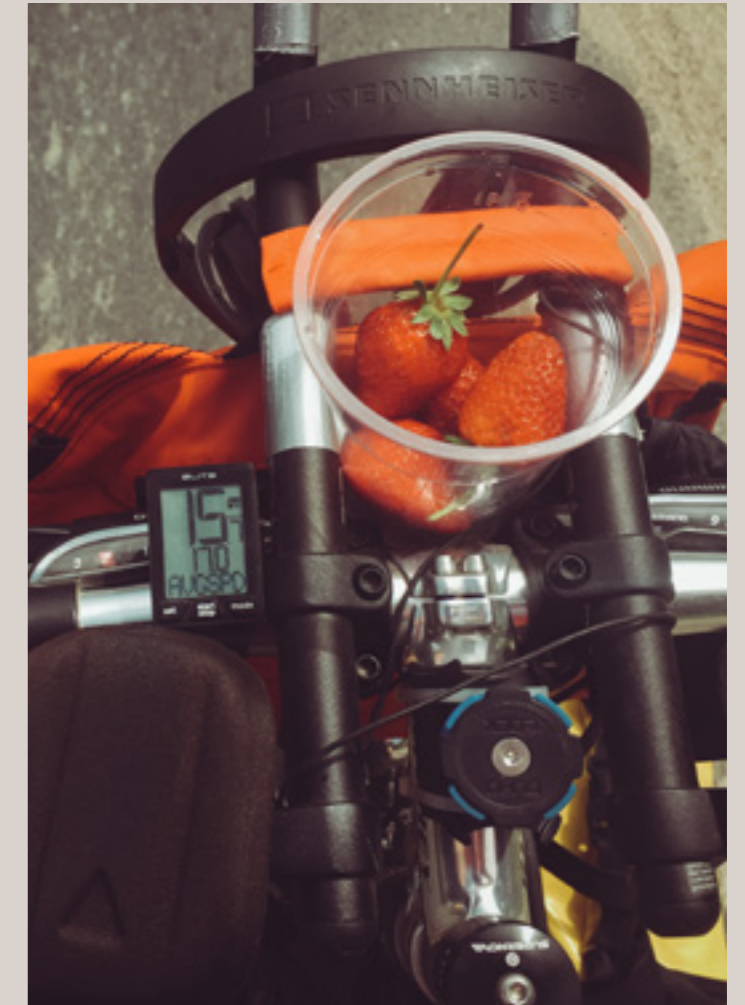
## The bike

In Amsterdam I always rode a squeaky old thing to get around town. Bikes often get stolen in the city so I never felt the urge to invest in a decent one. I'm not a professional cyclist, so I didn't own any proper equipment. But when the idea of long days on the road was planted in my mind, I knew I wanted to go for the best.

So what is the best bike for the job? It is hard to say because a trip like mine covers all kinds of terrain, ranging from rocky surfaces to smooth tarmac. I needed a bike with a simple setup that would be strong enough to carry the heavy load I traveled with. I decided on an iron frame that was easy to weld, with not too many fancy features, so if something did break, I would be able to have it fixed at a local mechanic's. I tried a couple of bikes that were widely recommended for long distances and made by Koga and Santos—brands that make some of the strongest touring bikes in the Netherlands. The features were great, but I didn't like how the bikes looked. When I grasped the handlebar of the Surly Long Haul Trucker for the first time, I immediately fell for it. There's a certain classic feel to the bike, which is made by a Canadian brand. It's a timeless design that has all the necessities required for a long journey yet at the same time keeps things simple.

The only thing I didn't like were the brake switches placed on the tips of the handlebar. This gives the bike a nice retro look but is totally impractical. I replaced the original handlebar with a straight one so I didn't have to take my hands off the steering to change gears. Bar ends and a triathlon steer were added to create multiple sitting positions.

I looked into a way to charge my phone while cycling. I use it for maps, music, and photos so it's an important tool. I discovered a USB hub called The Plug. Basically it is nothing more than a metal USB hub attached to the top of the head tube. In my case it gets powered by a Schmidt Son 28 hub on the front wheel. My phone is attached to the handlebar with a Quadlock case. This was the cleanest option I could find without having too much wiring and extra batteries attached to the bike. However, it charges slowly and the speed needs to be above 13 km/h to gain enough power. I looked into options that involved solar panels, but they all required too much extra gear and wiring on the bike. I also bought four Ortlieb panniers, an Ortlieb dry-sack, a handbag that fit exactly over the front-bars, three bottle-holders, a pump, a little mirror, a speedometer, fenders, and a double stand from the local hardware store. I was good to go.



At Tuz Gölü (Salt Lake), Turkey