

Equipment Good Enough for Iceland

OLD MAN MOUNTAIN COLDSPRINGS FRONT RACK

During the mid to late 1990's, I hesitated to put a suspension fork on my mountain bike, mostly because I knew I'd be touring fully loaded on the bike and I didn't want to complicate things by adding a component that would make my equipment decisions more difficult. Well, I finally gave in.

1999 saw the addition of a Marzocchi Bam 80 to my mountain bike for an upcoming tour in Iceland. The question

loomed, as it has recently for so many of us, How was I going to carry my gear, with panniers or a trailer? What a dilemma! Actually, not. I like panniers. I prefer panniers. It's not that I have any major issues with trailers, so don't e-mail me asking why I think panniers are "better." I'm not saying they're better, I'm saying I like them.

To use panniers with a suspension fork requires a special rack. There are two or three such racks I know of in the marketplace. Because I'm often like water and take the path of least resistance, I chose the Old Man Mountain Coldsprings Front Rack, which we sell through our Cyclosource catalog and have in stock at the office. As they say in some other less important sports, it was quite a fortuitous bounce.

Dave Robertson and I arrived at the airport in Keflavik, Iceland, with our stuff and had to assemble our bikes on site so we could ride the 35 kilometers or so into Reykjavik. (Dave used to work in Adventure Cycling's tours department.) Wheels, pedals, stem and handlebars, seat and post and, of course, racks and panniers.

I half expected something to go wrong with the Coldsprings rack but I was pleasantly surprised. I used the plat-

form version (they also make a lowrider) and, with the required 26-inch wheel Fit Kit, I had all of the necessary parts for proper assembly. All I needed were my hex keys and a small adjustable wrench, which is always part of my traveling tool kit.

One of my chief concerns with the Coldsprings Front Rack was that the point of attachment at the top end is with the brake bosses. This made me a bit uneasy, and the true test was soon to come. Included in the Fit Kit are two extended brake bolts that replace the regular ones. They are longer because they have to accommodate an extender and bracket that attach to the rack. There are slots in both the extender and rack so that adjustments can be made for different dimensions of various bikes. The bottom point is a straightforward drop-out style attachment. So far, so good. All that was left was to double-check all nuts, bolts and attachment points and take off.

Our journey across Iceland, along the Kjölur Route from south to north, would take us over mostly unpaved ground. For six days the route was often near impossible and our bodies, bikes and equipment were taking a pounding. After the first day we were sure equipment failure was imminent and I thought first of the Coldsprings racks and their attachment points. But after six brutal days we experienced exactly one flat tire between us. That's it. I

had fully loaded rear panniers on the Coldsprings Front Rack and it performed very well.

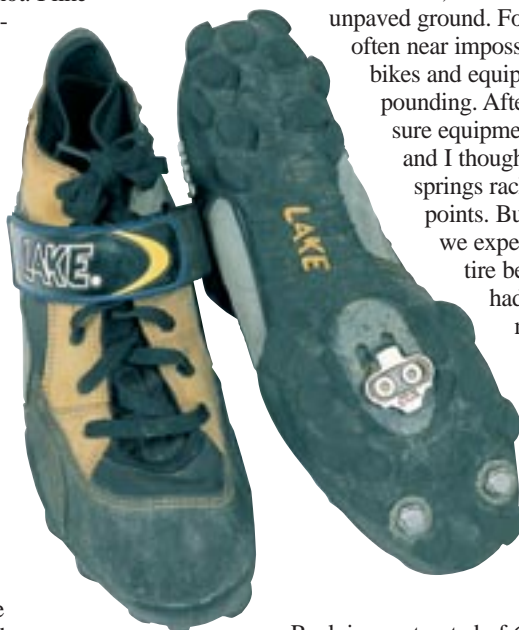
I don't know if I could have survived that route without front suspension but I know this: I wouldn't want to try.

The Coldsprings Front Rack is constructed of 6061-T6, aircraft grade, tubular aluminum and is designed to carry loads of up to 50 pounds. It retails for \$110 and can be purchased through Adventure Cycling's Cyclosource catalog at www.advcycling.org/cgi-shl/webc.exe/advsales/home.html or by calling (800) 721-8719.

For more info contact Old Man Mountain at www.old-mountain.com or by calling (888) 439-6445.



The Coldsprings Front Rack is designed to carry up to 50 pounds.



By Mike Deme

LAKE MX 176 CYCLING SHOE

I'd been looking to replace my dilapidated and bedraggled Scott Over Rock cycling shoes for some time and when Iceland loomed on the horizon I knew the time was now.

Like the Scotts, I wanted an SPD-compatible shoe that looked like a shoe, not a miniature Italian sports car. After scouring cyberspace, I finally found what I was looking for — The Lake MX 176.

This shoe is constructed of water-resistant Nubuck leather and Propex, a rugged and durable leather-like material. It offers three-quarter ankle support for those times when pushing or carrying your bike is essential. The Mud-studs and wide Alpine

outsole provide great traction in muddy or loose soils and a lycra ankle enclosure keeps unwanted objects from sneaking inside the shoe. A single hook and loop strap keeps the shoe laces from wandering or tangling.

These shoes took quite a beating and show only moderate fraying in spots. The sole shows minimal wear. One of the features I really appreciated was that they never became soaked, even after a 10-hour day of riding in driving rain. The parts of them that were wet dried very quickly when the rain stopped, and they weren't soggy the next morning.

The MX 176 retails for \$110. Lake offers a wide variety of cycling shoes to meet everyone's needs. For more info and where to find Lake cycling shoes contact them at www.lakecycling.com or by calling (800) 804-7777.

DANA DESIGNS ARJA

After the bicycle, I consider a tent to be the most important piece of gear on a self-contained bicycle tour, especially when traveling in places where it rains and blows a lot. When I decided to tour Iceland, I knew I'd need a tent that was free-standing, easy to set up and strike and, most importantly, a true refuge from the elements when I needed rest.

I did quite a bit of research and decided on the Dana Designs Arja, a three-season, double-wall tent designed to take the wind loads of a 4-season tent, but with the ventilation needed for non-winter weather. It's described as a two-person tent, which, in the tent description industry, means it's perfect for one person on a self-contained bike tour.

With a floor area of 35 square feet, a maximum height of 41 inches and a maximum width of 61 inches, the Arja offers plenty of room for one person and his stuff. The rain fly and vestibule add another 15.5 square feet and allow storage and protection of items you'd rather not have inside, like wet, filthy panniers. These can also be stored in the rear and accessed by a second door.

The weather in Iceland lived up to its reputation. One

day in particular was very challenging and the wind and rain just made it more so. I didn't even care about eating. All I wanted to do was crawl into my tent to hide and sleep. I certainly didn't want to worry about whether (no pun intended) water was seeping into my tent or it was going to blow over. The Arja provided me with exactly what I needed. It was bombproof and I slept like a baby for 10 hours and was ready the next day for more punishment, dished out by the land of ice and fire.

I was disappointed by a few things, however. I didn't like the stakes and I replaced them with sturdy aluminum ones, about 25 for good measure. Also, there is a flat spot just behind the the pole structure above the front door, an odd feature that I've never seen on any other tent. Water tended to collect there, but it never penetrated the rain fly.

Despite these minor objections, I was very pleased with the Arja. It is sturdily constructed of rip-stop nylon with grommets and zippers that can take a lot of abuse and it allows for excellent ventilation when necessary. The Arja retails for about \$375 and can be found at many outdoor specialty shops. You can find out more info about Dana Design tents at www.danadesign.com/retail_sup.htm or by calling (888) 357-3262. ●



The Dana Designs Arja (above, with rain fly in place) stood up to the punishment dished out by the Land of Ice and Fire.