

FIRST PLAY



**TRAVELER GUITAR
TRAVELCASTER DELUXE**
£299

WHAT IS IT? Full-scale Fender-style bolt-on travel guitar with a reduced body



**TRAVELER GUITAR
ULTRA-LIGHT ELECTRIC**
£299

WHAT IS IT? Full-scale minimalist travel electric guitar that weighs next to nothing and measures just 28 inches from tip to tail

Travelling Light

Need a compact but full-scale guitar to pack on your weekend break or road trip? Well, Traveler might have exactly what you need

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Neil Godwin

You'd be forgiven for thinking this was our April issue, but, no – this Traveler Guitar Travelcaster Deluxe is not something conceived in Photoshop. It's a full scale (648mm/25.5-inch) electric solidbody, although, as you can see, the 44mm thick poplar body is, er, rather reduced following the outline of Fender's classic Stratocaster scratchplate. And instead of the six-in-a-line headstock, we have a stubbier-looking three-a-side head, which helps to trim the length down to 33.75 inches – pretty much the equivalent of lopping the headstock off your Strat.

The Travelcaster Deluxe is one of 30-something full-scale travel guitars offered by Traveler: "From the original Pro-Series model to the cutting edge EG-1







1. The two-post vibrato looks like it's hanging on the edge (and it is), but with a die-cast block and steel saddles, it's perfectly functional
2. Having cut away most of the body, this design means the output jack is on the back, which doesn't help the plugged-in feel. A side-mounted jack might have been a better solution
3. This three-a-side headstock helps to trim the overall length but remains perfectly functional

Custom, to the revolutionary Traveler Acoustic Series, our guitars have travelled all over the world, from a submarine deep in the Atlantic to the peak of Mount Everest," we're told.

The company's roots date back to the inventor Leon Cox, who, as the website explains, "conceived and built the very first Traveler Guitar in his garage in Redlands, California in October of 1992". Some of you might remember that, and how it utilised the diaphragm of a stethoscope in its body "to provide the player with a battery-free, private listening experience". To cut a long story short, by the end of the 90s demand was so high that Fender, no less, took on Traveler manufacturing in its Corona factory before it moved overseas a short while later. The very futuristic electric Speedster soon followed (and still remains the best-selling model), while our Travelcaster Deluxe was launched in 2017.

Of our second model, Traveler states that the Ultra-Light Series is "the smallest, lightest, full-scale travel guitar in the world" and we're not going to argue. This headless design knocks a few more inches off the



4. Mounted on two maple blocks, the tuners aren't the easiest to adjust and to say restringing is fiddly is an understatement. Note the reversed output jack – again, plugged in, it gets in the way, especially strapped on

length – it measures just 28 inches – and the tuners are housed within the body (actually on two screwed-on blocks), while the strings pass over plastic rollers at the end of the minimal body, over a standard roller saddle tune-o-matic bridge and onto the aluminium anchor block placed behind the nut at the tip of the neck. The body and neck are a single piece of maple, a shade under 20mm thick, capped with an unspecified rosewood-ish looking fingerboard.

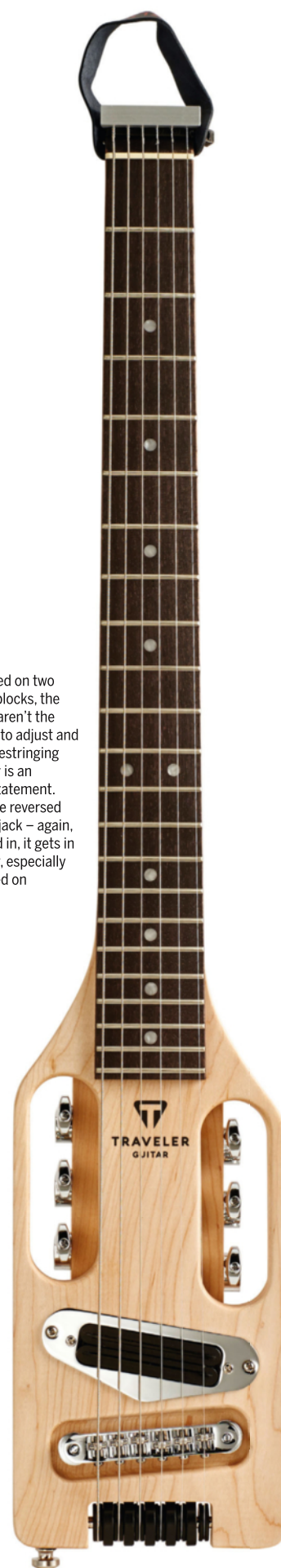
Strap buttons are provided on both guitars as well as a push chromed metal leg rest for seated practice on the thinner Ultra-Light.

Feel & Sounds

The more conventional Travelcaster Deluxe, with its vibrato, has a Strat-like array of single coils and controls. Aside from the light weight, the lack of body makes for an unusual playing experience both seated or strapped on (the latter not helped by the dished output jack on the back of the body). But aside from frets that lack a final polish, it plays, well, like an entry-level Strat and has sounds to match, albeit lacking a little sustain and, yes, body.

The Deluxe plays like an entry-level Strat, albeit lacking a little sustain and body

The Ultra-Light is a less conventional drive, even with its leg-rest inserted. While the neck and fretboard are quite normal like the Travelcaster, the lack of mass doesn't make for a playing experience that's any easier. Yes, you get used to it – up to a point – but it takes some time and a lot of adjustment. Likewise, the tuning. The body-placed tuners aren't the easiest to use and you really do need to stretch the strings. While doing so we broke one, and if you thought a Bigsby was a pain to restring, this in another level of pain altogether. There's less body and sustain to the sound here, too, although, to be fair, the humbucker – with a nicely bright and spanky voice and certainly with some gain – resembles an electric guitar. Unusual, yes, but with the large choice of good sounding amp/effects apps, all you're going to need is your smartphone.





5



6

Verdict

There's no shortage of down-sized travel guitars out there, or indeed unusual guitars made from oil cans or cigar boxes and the like, so Traveler is in good company. However, the compromise in both playing feel and sound may be just too much for all but the most dedicated practising player (who is faced with draconian carry-on rules or lack of car space thanks to the kids' paraphernalia when you set off on your hols). You could certainly pack the Ultra-Light into a small suitcase or carry bag and stow the Travelcaster in an overhead compartment... as long as you haven't closed the airport because security thought you were carrying a weapon, of course.

If you need small – but not in-scale length, fret complement or neck feel – Traveler Guitar certainly has a big and diverse range of electrics, electros and even acoustics with which to tempt you. And, c'mon, if you turn up at your local blues jam toting a Travelcaster you're going to be noticed. What would Leo have said? **G**

5. The roller saddle tune-o-matic is a nice touch, as is the perfectly good dual-rail humbucker. Due to lack of space, however, there are no volume or tone controls

6. Looking like a part from a headless Steinberger, this nicely machined anchor block illustrates the careful construction of these Traveler guitars. By the way, the leather 'hook' is so the guitar can be displayed on a wall in-store – it's easily removable



TRAVELER GUITAR TRAVELCASTER DELUXE

PRICE: £299 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Full-scale Strat-inspired travel electric guitar
BODY: Poplar
NECK: Maple, bolt-on
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.8mm
FINGERBOARD: Maple (face of neck), black dot inlays
FRETS: 22, medium
HARDWARE: 2-post vibrato with steel saddles and die-cast block, 3-a-side enclosed tuners (14:1 ratio) – chrome-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 54mm
ELECTRICS: 3 single-coil pickups, 5-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume, tone 1 (neck), tone 2 (middle)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.22.2/4.84
OPTIONS: Colour only
RANGE OPTIONS: Plenty to choose from, such as the best-selling Speedster (£385) and Speedster Hot Rod (£435). Topping the range is an ESP-style EC-1 (£599) or the more LP-like EG-1 at £499
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISHES: Surf Green (as reviewed), Candy Apple Red Metallic, Gloss Black – gloss body with satin neck w/gloss headstock face

8/10

PROS It's a perfectly good, fully functioning full-scale entry-level Stratocaster-alike

CONS The lack of body affects the playing feel (both strapped on and seated) and impacts on the sound



TRAVELER GUITAR ULTRA-LIGHT ELECTRIC

PRICE: £299 (inc gigbag)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Full-scale travel electric guitar
BODY: Maple
NECK: Maple
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/43.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Unspecified, pearloid dot inlays
FRETS: 22, medium
HARDWARE: Roller saddle tune-o-matic, body-mounted 3-a-side enclosed tuners (14:1 ratio) – chrome-plated
STRING SPACING, BRIDGE: 51.5mm
ELECTRICS: Single dual rails-style humbucker
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 1.43/3.15
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: Ultra-Lights are available in steel- and even nylon-string electro-acoustic formats at the same price. There's even an electro acoustic bass (at £389)
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, at £309, natural maple only
FINISHES: Natural Maple satin, Matte Black, Torino Red

6/10

Selectron UK Ltd
01795 419460
<https://travelerguitar.com>

PROS Compact size and weight, bearing in mind that it's a full-scale electric guitar

CONS Again, the lack of mass affects the playing feel and sound; tuning is fiddly, re-stringing even more so