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penny-farthing

The penny-farthing, sometimes called a “high-wheeler,” is one of the most recognizable vehicles in the history of transportation. Its enormous front wheel and small rear wheel give it a spectacular silhouette. Its name comes from two British coins whose dimensions resembled the vehicle's proportions. This configuration was driven by technical logic: before the invention of modern drivetrains, increasing the wheel’s diameter allowed for greater distance covered with each pedal stroke. The grand-bi represents a phase of intense experimentation in the history of the bicycle. It bears witness to an era when engineers were still searching for the most efficient forms of individual mobility. Riding it requires skill, balance, and courage. Despite its limitations, it helped popularize travel on two wheels. Even today, it remains a visual icon of 19th-century mechanical ingenuity. It serves as a reminder that the most familiar technologies are often the result of numerous trials and detours.