

Gear up!

A cross-section of cycling products selected and reviewed by CTC staff, specialist journalists and CTC members

Submit a review

If you want to submit a review, write or email the editor – details on page 88 – for advice on how to go about it. Each one printed wins a boxed set of three Cassini historical maps of the area of your choice. To see the whole range, visit www.cassinimaps.com. To order by phone, call 0845 458 9910.



BACKPACK PANNIERS

£50 & £110

Reviewed by Technical Editor
Chris Juden

The Ortlieb Vario (near right) and Carradice Carradry Rucksack Pannier (far right) are the latest answers to a need that's as old as the bicycle pannier. We all know that wheels make things easier to move, but normal panniers are awkward things to carry off the bike, which is one reason so many people pedal under the burden of a rucksack these days. That may be bearable for small amounts of luggage or distance, but not if you have lots to carry and it's more than a couple of miles to work or the shops. As for holidays: of course you'll not want anything to detract from the pleasure of cycling – but if you also want to do a bit of serious hiking, on your back the load must go!

Local errands and the bike-hike mix have similar but not identical demands, which play to the different strengths of these two bags. Carradice attach shoulder straps to the pannier's front, where they can remain in-situ. That's handy for frequent transitions between wheels and feet when shopping and commuting. The front of a pannier is also less likely to transfer road grime onto smart clothes, but carrying comfort will depend on what's inside the bag!

Ortlieb's rucksack hardware, on the other hand, fastens over the carrier hooks on the back. It's a more engineered conversion, more adjustable, and with a soft and vented backplate for greater comfort. It takes a few minutes to deploy this kit or to stow it in a neat but rather tight front pocket. This delay becomes insignificant if you'll spend several hours either biking or hiking, which is when the Vario comes into its own. Neither conversion has a hip belt however, to take the load off your shoulders, so you'll not want to carry much weight for that long.

Carradice throw in a padded laptop case, for even more commuter appeal, whilst Ortlieb include a helmet net,



two external sleeves (e.g. for bike bottles) and an internal document pocket. Another significant difference is the price: £50 for a Carradice 'backannier' against £110 for the Ortlieb Vario – although either can be found for less. Otherwise these bags are quite similar, both with roll-tops and 100% waterproof welded seams, 20-litre capacity and about 1.15kg in weight.

Filled and used singly, either is big enough to make the bike steer like it's out of track. That's not a huge problem, but enough to raise the question of what to carry on the other side – and what to do with it when you walk? Both panniers are also a symmetrical design and quite wide at the bottom (the Vario does not even taper), increasing the chance of heel conflict but allowing them to be hung on whichever side of the carrier.

It's a draw: Carradice scores at home whilst Ortlieb plays better away. Decide which matters most to you then count your money, since you can have two of one for the price of the other!

Details: carradice.co.uk and ortlieb.de



GET CYCLING

A BRAND NEW CYCLING CENTRE IN YORK



EWA-MARINE IWP WATERPROOF POUCH £20.42

Reviewed by CTC
Councillor Tim Jackson

A waterproof bag on a lanyard, this plastic pouch does an excellent job of keeping your iPhone (or iPod Touch) dry and clean in all conditions. You can even use it while swimming, apparently, so even the worst downpour won't trouble it. You can still use the touch screen through the plastic, and so make and take phone calls, browse the internet, etc. You can even use the camera. But you can't use headphones and it's very difficult to take out of the pouch once in.

Details: camerasunderwater.co.uk



Shimano 105

£49.99+ (rear mech)

Reviewed by Technical
Editor Chris Juden

Shimano 105 has long been a popular groupset with the fast-touring/audax fraternity, so I was pleased to try the latest upgrade. I might have preferred a triple, but the new rear mech design allows a 28T sprocket and this makes the compact double a more viable alternative. Luckily I've not found myself on a hill too steep or been too tired yet to grunt the 32in gear up it.

The next most significant improvement is concealed cables. No more washing lines, just like new Ultegra. The previous 5600 series was already 10-speed with a Hollowtech II chainset and the option of a slate black finish as well as silver. The 5700 components add a bit more style, with subtly contrasting gloss and matt finishes. A pity



Shimano don't offer a 57mm reach brake in this 'lodestar black' colour – only in silver.

Other refinements have trickled down from Ultegra, such as improved brake lever ergonomics and better hub sealing. A good group just got a bit better.

Details: madison.co.uk

CITY BIKES • SCHOOL RUN
FOLDERS • ELECTRIC BIKES
TANDEMS • MULTI SEATERS
FAST BIKES • SPECIAL NEEDS

SALES REPAIRS
HIRE EVENTS

www.getcycling.org.uk
admin@getcycling.org.uk

Get Cycling CiC
22 Hospitals Fields Road
Fulford
York
YO10 4DZ

Tel: 01904 636 812
Fax: 01904 778 963

ARKEL XM-45 PANNIERS £202

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

The Arkel 45s are designed for mountain bike touring, hence their tall, slender design, rear facing pockets and stabilising cinching straps. The mounting system is extremely secure: they never once unhooked over rough Mexican trails where other brands did. And best of all, they won't slide up and down the rack rails. They're a cavernous 45 litres, divided into roomy top and rear pockets and a main compartment; a chunky zip runs right down to the base, so you can access kit without riffling around. The panniers are double lined, which keeps all but torrential rain out.

The eyebrow-raising price tag, some £50 above Ortlieb's top of the range Bikepackers, is in part justified by the high quality of their construction. Still, it would be nice to have rain-covers included, or at least a shoulder strap – both of which are available as extras. I felt the lid-tops could overlap a touch more when the panniers are half-full, to stop water pooling in any folds, and while the elasticated bungee cords work well, a secondary stabilising arm would be handy to prevent them 'flapping' out over rough terrain. Overall though, these are supremely tough panniers that in the last year have easily withstood everything I've thrown at them.

Details: arkelpanniers.co.uk

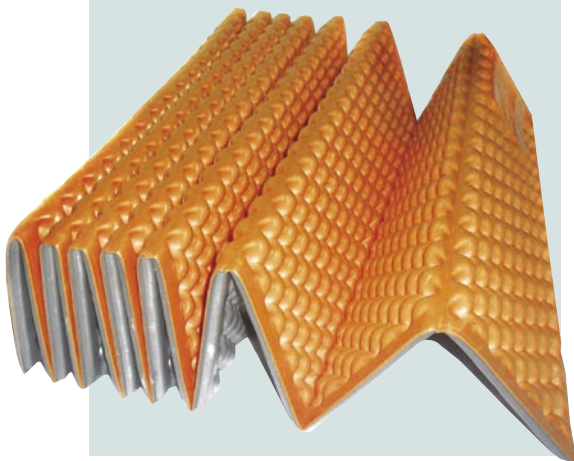


Thermorest Z-Lite camping mat £34.99

Reviewed by CTC member Kath Lynch

We had used Thermorest self-inflating mats previously and found them tiresome to pack away. Thermorest's latest innovation for a good night's sleep is the Z-Lite mattress. It's 183cm long and 51cm wide, but the concertina design makes it a 10-second job to pack away in the polythene sleeve provided. It is made of closed-cell foam in an egg box style design and weighs 460g. We have two. They are very easy to carry, being less bulky than other closed cell foam mattresses, and they fit easily across the top of rear panniers. The Z-Lite is a three-season mattress. We used ours for a five-week tour in France and we found them warm, very comfortable, and extremely durable. They're very reasonably priced, too, and it looks like they will give years of trouble-free service.

Details: available at outdoor shops. The distributor is firstascent.co.uk



ON-ONE 456 SUMMER SEASON FRAME £164.99 inc delivery

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

The Summer Season is an even slacker geometry version of the original 456, On-One's trail hardtail designed for a 4-, 5- or 6-inch suspension fork. It's equally good value. Its main selling points are its strong chrome-moly frame – down- and top-tubes are both oversized at 35mm diameter and both are reinforced at the head tube to support a taller fork – and those slacker angles. Listed as 73° seat and 67.5° head, my son's 16in bike is 71.7/66.5° with a 130mm fork and no rider. That head angle means lots of stabilising trail, so it holds its line well on bumpy descents. With a long top tube for the frame size – the 16in suits a 5'9"

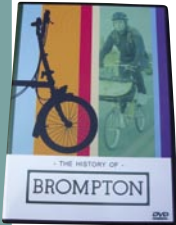
rider – it's designed to be ridden with a short stem, which stops the steering feeling *too* ponderous.

Wishbone seat-stays and bridgeless chain-stays mean lots of room around the rear tyre. A 2.3in tyre can comfortably be ridden year round, up to 2.5 in drier weather. There are fittings for a bottom bracket mounted chain-keeper, one bottle, and – curiously – a rear carrier. Being sturdy and steel it's not light, at 2.5kg for the frame. But for the thrill-seeking rider on a budget, it's well worth considering. My 16-year-old now waits for me after tricky descents...

Details: available in 14, 16, 18 and 20in. See on-one.co.uk



Cycle shorts



The History of the Brompton

£15 + £1.20 P&P

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

This 71-minute, interview-laden DVD charts the

development of the Brompton, from made-in-a-bedroom '70s prototype to benchmark-setting folder. It's like an episode of BBC's Horizon but solely about Andrew Ritchie's iconic bike. Edifying. PAL or NTSC. Brompton dealers & britishlocalhistories.co.uk



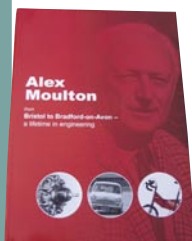
Greatest Cycling Climbs

£8.99

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

Lack of a cyclist in the photos makes this compendium of Britain's best

climbs look a bit 'tarmac fancier's handbook', but the detail, route profiles and maps easily make up for them. There's even a chart to write in when you did each climb and how long it took. The climbs are rated out of 10 – although Bealach na ba scores 11! 176pp, ISBN 9780711231207



Alex Moulton auto-biography

£25 + £5.75 P&P

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

Less a personal autobiography than a history

of Dr Moulton's engineering life, it's a photograph- and technical-drawing-packed insight into the man who pioneered the small-wheeled, full-suspension bicycle. Moultoneers will enjoy it; casual readers may want more on the bikes. 320pp, ISBN 9781872922393, alexmoultonbooks.co.uk



RSP TOURLITE REAR LIGHT £19.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

For commuting and touring, rear carrier mounted lights are the most convenient, staying bolted in place and remaining visible whatever your load. This battery one (2 x AA, included) has a 0.5W central LED and two angled towards the sides, and it fits carrier mounts 80mm wide. There are three modes: all flashing, side flashing and centre constant, or all constant. Run time is claimed at 'up to 100 hours'; I've yet to reach it. The Tourlite is at least as bright as Busch und Müller's D'Toplight Permanent (£5 dearer) and significantly brighter than Smart's cheaper rack-mounted light. Like them it incorporates a big rear reflector.

Details: cyclelife.com

RSP Asteri 3 £79.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

The Asteri 3 has more in common with high-power LED torches than the clip-on lights it resembles. It uses a 3W LED powered by a rechargeable lithium ion battery – and it's bright, around 200 lumens. That's plenty for commuting, even on dark lanes as it's tightly focused, and enough as a back-up light for nighttime mountain biking. There's no helmet mount, however, only a quick release handlebar bracket. It comes with a small, plug-sized fast charger (2.5 hours), so it might do for touring. It has three modes: high, low and flashing. On high, it'll run for six or seven hours, but then doesn't die completely: you'll get another two or three on low power, which will stop you being stranded. For commuters who don't like dynamos, it's a good option – although having some peripheral light would be better for visibility. Weight: 150g.

Details: cyclelife.com



Best of three: cycle shoes

Michael Stenning compares cycle shoes suitable for the UK's variable climate



BONTRAGER STREET (MEN'S) £89.99

Showerproof street shoes might seem a curious choice but these faux leather uppers are breathable and ventilated, so the shoes will cope with temperate summer as well milder, wetter winters. Should things turn torrential, their narrow profile means overshoes will fit. There's a cut away panel for recessed cleats, or you can use them on flat pedals as is.

Faux leathers have come a long way in recent years and better variants such as this mimic genuine hides which will undoubtedly broaden the appeal to vegetarian/vegan cyclists just as much as those who enjoy easy-care footwear. Black livery with reflective white detailing is subtle and doesn't scream cyclist when you're off the bike. Velcro closures are quicker and easier to operate than laces in winter-weight gloves or with fingers nipped by chill.

Performance on and off the bike is impressive thanks to a sole striking the perfect balance between stiffness and compliance. There's very little power-robbing flex even at high cadences, yet they're comfortable to walk in for prolonged periods. The rubber sole lacks the deep tread of MTB shoes but grips well on hard surfaces.

The fit of our test shoes was superb and while not a unique concept, Bontrager employ eSoles – custom foot-beds compatible with other orthopaedic models.

Details: sizes 39-49, bontrager.com

Lake LX140 £135.99

Resembling a closed-toed sandal with an integrated 'sock', the quirky-looking LX140 is completely waterproof but breathable, so shouldn't get too hot. The upper is made from eVent, a technical fabric with similar properties to Gore-Tex, while reinforced toe and heel bumpers with integrated reflectives provide protection.

The rubberised sole is used elsewhere in the Lake range and combines reassuring rigidity with sufficient flex for prolonged walking. However, in keeping with the brand's excellent MXZ MTB winter boot, cleat engagement can feel cumbersome and remote. Compared with the other shoes, their more pronounced bulk means that on flat pedals they can only be used with the biggest nylon MTB clips and straps.

Details: sizes 40-48, todayscyclist.co.uk



SHIMANO MT22 MOUNTAIN TRAIL SHOE £49.98

Arguably the most 'normal' shoe on test, Shimano's showerproof MT22 makes a competent all weather commuting/touring and trail shoe – so long as suede guard is periodically worked into the hide with a suede brush and they're left to dry naturally after a wet ride. Unlike many trainer-style designs, the mesh is discrete, offering ventilation without admitting water like a sieve.

The toe box is generous. Scuff bumpers and discrete reflective detailing are practical touches without clashing with the understated tan/brown livery. A chunky rubberised tread copes admirably on all surfaces from wet pavement through to leafy trails and is comfortable for prolonged walking too. There's no penalty in cycling terms; the mid sole is commendably stiff and supportive.

Details: sizes 36-48, madison.co.uk. Test pair supplied by edinburghbicycle.com

