

# ROAD BIKE TYRES

*More durable tyres make sense at any time of year for club riding, commuting, audax riding, or training. Editor **Dan Joyce** tests four pairs*

**PUNCTURES ARE** more common in winter due to wet roads and detritus, and they're less pleasant because you get cold fixing them. While you can get 25mm and 28mm tyres that are nearly impregnable – e.g. Schwalbe's Marathon Plus – heavier, less supple tyres detract from the feel of a road or audax bike. The best winter road bike tyre isn't necessarily the toughest. It's the one whose balance of puncture resistance, rolling performance, durability, and grip best suits your riding.

I've tested 25mm tyres here. Any road bike should accommodate them, and they can be run slightly softer than 23mm tyres, putting more rubber on the road and increasing grip without the same risk of pinch puncturing on the edge of an unseen pothole. Depending on clearances, you might go to 28mm or more.

## YOUR THOUGHTS?

**WRITE TO US:** Cycle Letters,  
PO Box 313, Scarborough,  
YO12 6WZ

**EMAIL US:**  
[editor@ctc.org.uk](mailto:editor@ctc.org.uk)

**JOIN IN ONLINE:**  
[forum.ctc.org.uk](http://forum.ctc.org.uk)

### LONGEVITY

You get more miles from a tyre with: harder rubber, which trades off against grip; and a thicker tread, which trades off against weight and rolling performance. Wear life will depend on usage, but you ought to be able get at least a few thousand miles from tougher road bike tyres.

### ROLLING PERFORMANCE

Supple, lighter weight tyres with a thin tread and a high TPI (threads-per-inch) casing roll better but don't wear as well and tend to puncture more easily. I test rode all the tyres on hilly road routes. I also did six roll-down tests per pair on a marked course on a calm day to get a rough idea of which rolled best.

### PUNCTURE RESISTANCE

Most 'winter' tyres use one or two thin layers of kevlar or nylon under the tread to prevent penetration by glass, flints and thorns. Some use a different type of rubber, which is heavier. Many are also reinforced bead-to-bead with polymer mesh to resist slashing. A thicker tread also helps, as does a lower threads-per-inch casing as thicker threads are harder to cut.

### GRIP

On tarmac, tyre grip is down to rubber compound and tyre pressure rather than tread pattern, because the road presses into the tyre rather than vice-versa. Dual-compound tyres have softer, grippier and faster-wearing rubber on the shoulders of the tyre for cornering, and harder rubber in the centre for better rolling and wear life.

### WEIGHT

Lighter tyres feel nicer to ride on and are marginally easier to accelerate, although there isn't an exact correlation between weight and rolling performance. A folding bead saves about 50g over a wire bead. A narrower width also saves weight, and some tyres measure up smaller than their nominal size. Less rubber in or under the tread saves weight too.

### SIZING

Most premium winter road tyres are available only in 23, 25 and 28mm widths in 700C (ISO 622). Some also exist in 584 (650B) and 559 (26in) diameters, and occasionally less common sizes such as 540 (24in), 451 (20in) and 406 (20in!). For more on tyre sizing, see [bit.ly/ctc-tyresizes](http://bit.ly/ctc-tyresizes).



Illustration courtesy of Schwalbe ([schwalbe.co.uk](http://schwalbe.co.uk))



### 1 CONTINENTAL GRAND PRIX 4 SEASON

£54.95 [conti-tyres.co.uk](http://conti-tyres.co.uk)

As the name implies, this is designed to be a tougher, year-round version of the Grand Prix 4000 race tyre. The two layers of Vectran under the tread resisted my manual attacks with sharps very well, and there's a bead-to-bead layer of polyamide Duraskin that gives some sidewall protection. While I didn't push any of the tyres to their traction limits, the 4 Season's grip feels reassuringly good on wet roads. That will be down to the rubber compound rather than the tread pattern, although that functions as a useful wear indicator. The GP 4 Season is very light for an all-year tyre, weighing scarcely more than a race tyre and feeling like one. Rolling performance is good, on a par with the Panaracer and behind the Michelin. Sizes: 23-622, 25-622, 28-622. Weight (25): 218g.

● **Good wet weather grip and toughness but relatively expensive and not as quick as the Michelin**



### 2 MICHELIN PRO4 ENDURANCE

£40.99 [bike.michelin.co.uk](http://bike.michelin.co.uk)

The Michelin Krylion was my favourite road bike rubber of recent years. I tested dozens of tyres and that hit the sweet spot: much faster than everything tougher than it and tougher than everything faster than it. Then Michelin stopped making it. Or rather, they re-branded it as the Pro4 Endurance. It seems to be just as good. It rolls notably better than the other tyres here, all of which I tested at 7bar. Its dual compound tread offers decent grip and promises good wear life. Puncture protection is comparable to the GP 4 Season's: good through the tread and with some bead-to-bead reinforcement. It's now available in a 28mm version, and colours are an option if you want to coordinate your bike. Sizes: 23-622, 25-622, 28-622. Weight (25): 256g

● **The new Krylion. Rolls exceptionally well for a tough road bike tyre, with no real drawbacks**



### 3 PANARACER RACE D EVO 2

£39.99 [zyro.co.uk](http://zyro.co.uk)

The Race D Evo 2 is Panaracer's four-season road tyre. It will be replaced by a new version, the Race D Evo 3, in the spring. I'd suggest waiting for that because the new one is said to address a problem of the Evo 2: the propensity for its tacky tread to pick up crumbs of grit (and glass?). It's annoying when it rattles under your mudguards and it risks embedding in the tyre, increasing the risk of punctures. The Race D Evo 2's folding bead is tight too, so puncture repair could be testing with cold fingers. Performance otherwise is good. The Race D Evo 2's rolling efficiency is identical to the Conti 4 Season's, according to my simple tests. There's a puncture resistant belt under the tread and the casing is reinforced. Sizes: 23-622, 25-622. Weight (25): 248g.

● **The grit-attracting tread is a drawback to this otherwise effective tyre. Wait for the Evo 3**



### 4 SCHWALBE DURANO DD

£34.99 [schwalbe.com](http://schwalbe.com)

Schwalbe's Durano range contains two tyres I like a lot: the standard Durano, which is great for summer mile-eating, and the Durano Plus, which I've used for years on my fixed-wheel town bike. The Durano DD fits somewhere in between, with the DD standing for double defence. As well as two layers of nylon under the tread, there's sidewall protection that the standard Durano lacks. It's a significantly heavier tyre than the others here and it feels rather lifeless on the road. The surprise is that it rolls well – slightly better in my tests than the Conti 4-Season or the Panaracer Race D. There are no problems with grip or puncture resistance. Yet I struggled to think of a reason to choose it over its Durano stablemates. Sizes: 23-622, 25-622, 28-622 with folding bead; same sizes plus 28-584 and 28-559 in wire bead. Weight (25, folding): 326g.

● **Better rolling than the weight suggests but the standard Durano is nicer to ride and the Durano Plus is much tougher**