



Grouptest

Rear panniers

Large capacity panniers can accommodate camping loads, long-trip essentials, or simply grocery shopping. **Liz Colebrook** tests four pairs



LIZ COLEBROOK

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Liz is a framebuilder and the owner of Beaumont Bicycle. She's also a qualified occupational therapist

Panniers put big loads on the bike rather than on your back. More capacious than bikepacking bags, they traditionally come in pairs and attach to a luggage rack via a user-friendly hook system, making them secure in transit yet quick to remove and carry about.

For longer expeditions, an additional front rack fitted to the fork with smaller panniers can extend capacity while keeping the load balanced.

A single rear pannier is popular with commuters and day-trippers; it all depends on how much you need to carry. If you don't have enough stuff for a single rear then a small front pannier used at the rear works well (and is also a good way to introduce children to cycle touring). But for a weekly shop or a longer excursion, a pair of practical rear panniers is ideal.

Details

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Capacity

How much a pannier holds, measured in litres. An average single rear pannier holds about 20-25L, a single front pannier half that.

expect our panniers to leak. Construction methods and materials can boast impressive waterproof credentials, but the closure system is also relevant in keeping stuff dry.

2 Attachment system

How a pannier hooks onto the luggage rack. This should include a safety system to prevent panniers from jumping off. Look for modular hooks as not all racks have the same size (or shaped) tubing. The hook-to-rack fit should be as snug as possible or it will 'chatter' in motion.

4 Functionality

This includes ease of access, heel clearance, ease of carrying when off the bike, optional extras, and visibility.

3 Weather Resistance

Nowadays, we don't

5 Durability

Panniers need to stand the test of time as we cart our 'goods and shackles' about. Being able to order spares or have worn parts repaired is a major plus; some manufacturers offer this service.



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Verdict

The weight, capacity, and weather resistance of the £35 Decathlon and £115 Brooks bags are similar, so the £80 price difference is a matter of pocket position, roll and tether preference, and materials. The Brooks wins on style but you won't beat the Decathlon on value.

As panniers sold as pairs, the Ortlieb Back-Roller Plus and Carradice Super C are similarly priced but have different strengths. The Ortlieb customer will likely put worst-case scenario waterproofness first, functionality second, and bolt-on extras third. I think the Carradice customer would put easy access first, with slightly less dramatic waterproofness and huge capacity joint second.



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1 Decathlon Elops 25L Bike Bag 900 Kompaktrail

£34.99 EACH deathlon.co.uk

THIS IS A single 25L pannier with adjustable KlickFix hooks (fitting rack tubing 6-16mm) and an anti-sway 'elbow'. The rainproof polyamide fabric is a welded construction with a roll-down top, making water ingress virtually impossible. Features include a rear light loop and reflective sections on both sides, plus an inside pocket. It's light at 790g but perhaps at the expense of durability, as there's no reinforcement at the base.

Quite simply an excellent value for money pannier.

2 Brooks Scape Large Pannier

£115 EACH brooksengland.com

OFFICIALLY 'MUD GREEN', this 22L pannier is made from a 100% waterproof polyester with welded seams and a roll-top closure. Aluminium hooks secure the top either side. The base has reinforcement and there's a waterproof-zip front pocket. Both sides feature a reflective daisy-chain loop system to attach an optional pack (Scape Saddle Pocket Bag, £42.50). The pannier attaches to 6-16mm rack tubing with KlickFix adjustable fittings. Weight: 760g. Max load: 9kg.

A very classy, stylish pannier, ideal for lighter loads.

3 Carradice Super C Rear Panniers

£127/PAIR carradice.co.uk

HAND STITCHED IN Lancashire, the waxed cotton duck Super Cs hold 54L per pair and weigh 1,220g each. They're robust – ideal for a heavy grocery shop. They're asymmetrically shaped for heel clearance, and stand on a reinforced base. They have side pockets and a lid-and-drawcord top closure, which is quicker to access but not so watertight if they fell into a river. The hook system is strong and adjustable; there's an accessory (£10) if your rack requires 16mm hooks.

Bags of room for a big shop or tour – and handmade to endure.

4 Ortlieb Back Roller Plus

£140/PAIR ortlieb.com

THE BACK ROLLER is Ortlieb's market leading roll-top pannier, where the strap tethering the roll doubles as a shoulder strap when you're off the bike. 'Plus' denotes the lighter, dearer PS36C waterproof material. Each pannier holds 20L, weighs 840g, and features an inside mesh pocket, reinforced corners, and easily adjustable hooks (8-16mm). Available in green, blue, red or black, these are fully serviceable panniers (repairs via UK distributor). There's a range of optional attachments.

State of the art waterproof panniers in various colours.