

Gear up!

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

Submit a review

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CIRCE HELIOS DUO

FROM £899

Reviewed by CTC Campaigns Officer
Adam Coffman

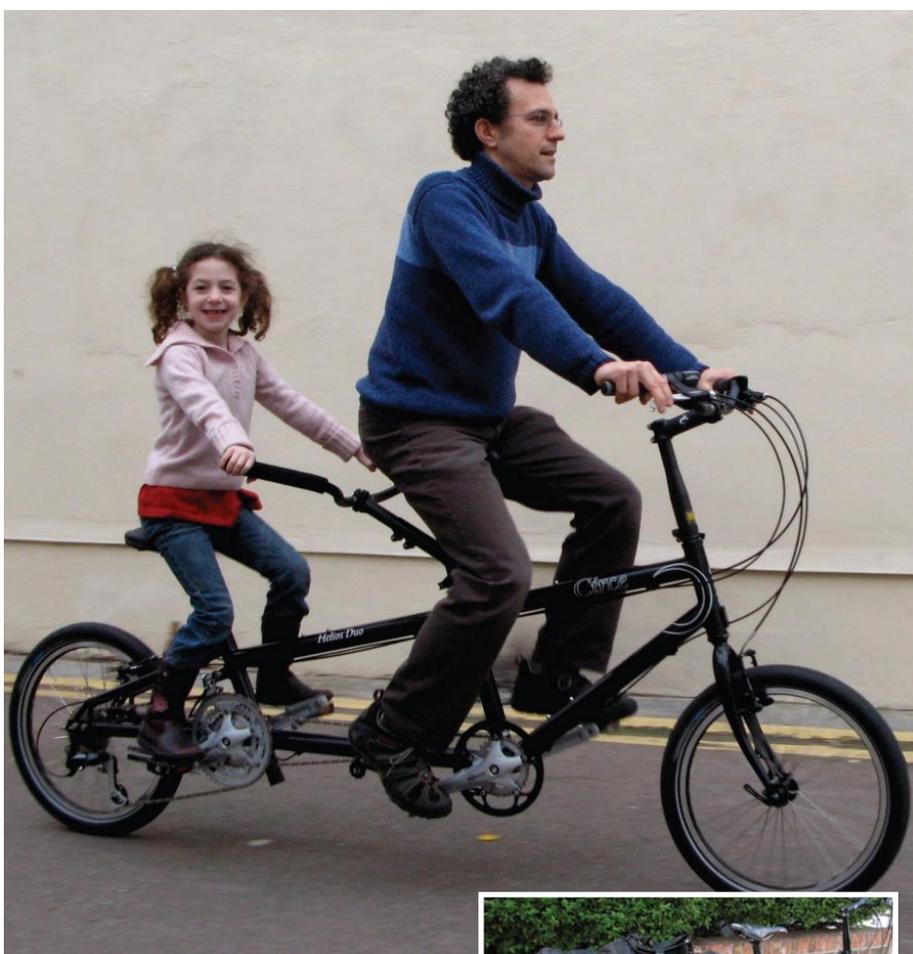
The Helios is a stylish and well-proportioned tandem aimed primarily at families. Its 20" (ISO 406) wheels, low stand-over height, and telescopic rear seatpost enable it to fit a vast range of rider sizes – from children as young as 3 ½ to tall adults. It has also been designed to carry large and heavy loads: an ingenious optional rack – which fits in place of the stoker seatpost – turns it into a kind of longtail load bike. It takes a few minutes to change the configuration.

The Helios's sit up and beg riding position suits the type of urban riding that I normally do, providing excellent visibility of the road ahead. My daughter Mia (7) is used to being a stoker on a tandem but she particularly liked being on the Circe. She said she felt very high up and could easily see lots of other children stuck in cars as we sailed past them.

It didn't feel like we were riding a small-wheeled bike. The two-inch wide Schwalbe Big Apple tyres offer the comfort and rolling resistance you'd expect from bigger wheels with narrower tyres. I was impressed with the smooth shifting of the Shimano Alivio drivetrain too. I was easily able to shift up and down through the gears as I navigated the traffic, and the shifting felt more like a normal bike than a long-chained tandem.

As well as riding the Helios with Mia, I rode it solo with the rear seat in place and also fully laden with four panniers on the optional rack. Handling was good and it was much easier than pulling a similar-sized load in a trailer.

If you are a cycling family, this bike



is well worth the investment. It's very versatile. As well as one adult to pilot it, it can be used to transport: two children in childseats; one child in a childseat plus two rear panniers; an adult or child stoker plus two rear panniers or one childseat; or four rear panniers, plus anything you can strap to the top of the rack.

Even the Henry Ford choice of colour is fine, given the standard of the paintwork. My only criticism for use around town is that everything is



quick release, from saddles to racks to handlebars. So invest in security skewers! It weighs 20kg with its custom rack and 18kg set up for a stoker.
Details: www.circycles.com,
01954 789284

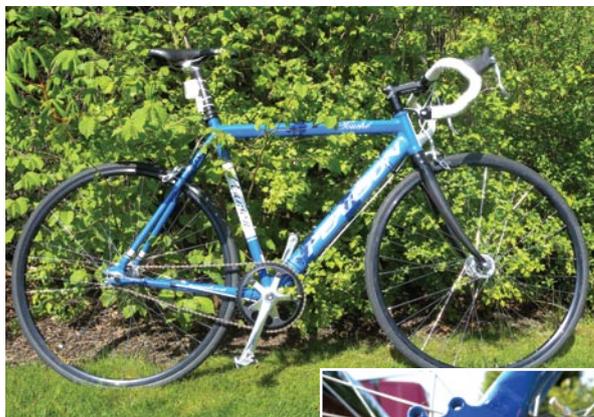
Pearson Touché Trois FROM £900

Reviewed by CTC Member
Groups Officer Adrian Lawson

This is the same Pearson Touché we reviewed in the Dec 08/Jan 09 issue of Cycle but with a few different components – notably the new S3X three-speed fixed-wheel hub, which gives ratios of 0.625, 0.75 and 1:1. Being a fan of fixed-wheel bikes, I was intrigued by this.

I have a long commute to the office and when I ride it on my normal fixed-wheel bike with colleagues I often struggle to keep up, because I use a fairly low gear. I was looking forward to the option of a big gear when I wanted it without losing an easy gear for climbs.

Gear shifting is via a bar-end control. Move the lever and as soon as you back off the pedalling pressure the hub changes gear. You can also change while stationary at the traffic lights, which is great for quick starts.



The greatest pleasure is descending. On a normal fixie that can be hard on the legs and nerves. Being able to stick it in top gear allows you to go down much more quickly. The only drawback is the small amount of play in the hub when you put back-pressure on the pedals, or when you're struggling to keep up with the cadence. Some play is inevitable to permit the gear to change. It's mitigated by the fact that there is also a sidepull rear brake, so you can use that rather than the cranks to help you slow down.

I was pleasantly



surprised by the bike overall; it would be good even with a standard fixed-wheel hub. With the S3X hub, I appreciated being able to keep up on fast rides and pedal an easier gear when riding alone. The only thing I wasn't keen on was the loss of the fixie's minimalist elegance, due to the ad hoc, cluttered look of the gear cable. www.pearsoncycles.co.uk, 020 8642 2095

Brooks Barbican shoulder bag £241.91

Reviewed by bike designer Mike Burrows

As well as keeping Brooks in business, Selle Royal's buyout has brought a touch of Italian flair to a range of accessories, including this stylish 'courier bag'. I doubt you will see many couriers using them – more like bankers carrying home their bonuses! The Barbican is made from a heavy oiled-cotton canvas, with leather trim and fittings and a neat magnetic catch to hold the flap down. The strap system is unusual: instead of a (more secure) second strap, the one length of webbing passes through bag loops to buckle around the waist.



There is one main compartment plus a concealed zip-up space and three small pockets for cards, pens, etc. I would have liked to see an extra divider to keep the paperwork away from the avocados and broccoli, but this is a minor niggle. Like complaining about the size of the boot on

a Ferrari, it is not what it is about. The obvious shortcoming is that it costs more than most people pay for their bicycle. But then again, it's something that I would expect to be mentioning in my will.

Details: www.brooksengland.com, distributed by Extra UK 01933 672 170

Camelbak Flashflo

£34.95

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

More Camelbot, this hydration pack fits around the waist of those who can't get on with a backpack. A clothing clip puts the long hose near your mouth but I found it ineffective: try a carabiner or use the waist clips as shown. Fluid capacity is lower at 1.3L and too much weight in the luggage pocket can tilt the Flashflo backwards. But mountain bike handling is better with the weight this low on your back and you don't get as sweaty. A viable alternative. **Details:** www.zyro.co.uk



Vanguard arm warmers

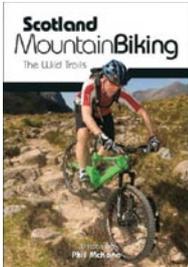
£20.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Arm warmers are ideal for cool summer starts and spring and autumn days. These flat-stitched fleece-lined Lycra ones are as good as any and better priced than most. While they come with grippers to help them stay up above your biceps, as most do, a typical cyclist's T-Rex physique can see arm warmers rolling down like Nora Batty's stockings. So I went down a size to Small and they fitted snugly. They're machine washable. Sizes: S-XXL. **Details:** distributed by Moore Large, www.moorelarge.co.uk



Cycle shorts

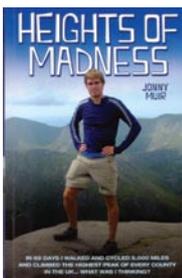


Scotland Mountain Biking

£15.95

Reviewed by
Ginny Leonard

This is a clear guide to the best trails in Scotland, not just the areas you'd expect but some great long distance rides in the wilds. Phil McKane's experience as a ride leader is evident in the easy to follow routes. I'm tempted by the CTC! 208pp, ISBN: 9781906148102

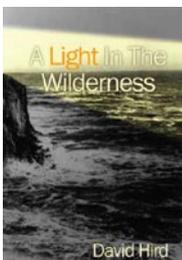


Heights of Madness

£12.99

Reviewed by Mark Waters

Jonny Muir describes a 92-day journey on a bicycle to climb to the summit of each county in the UK. It's a joy to read, particularly if you're a cyclist and a mountaineer. Being both I fully understood and identified with his every experience. All I want to do now is try it myself. 288pp, ISBN: 9781844546640



A Light in the Wilderness

£14.99

Reviewed by CTC member Dave Drinkwater

Read this before setting off to Cape Wrath for a more fulfilling ride. David Hird's book details Scotland's far North West, and specifically the road to the cape's lighthouse. It includes history and geography; walking, cycling and minibus journeys; the Cape Wrath Fellowship, and more. 280pp, ISBN: 9781905974016

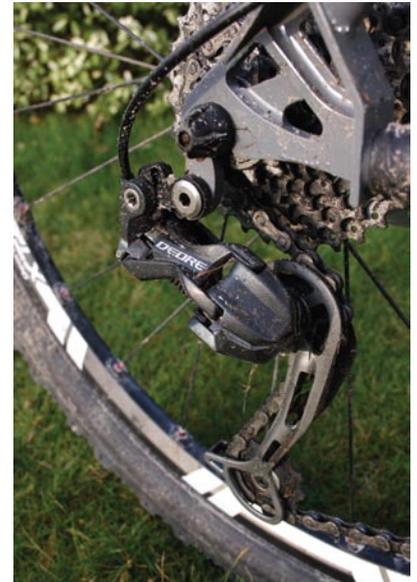
Shimano Deore £49.95 (SHADOW REAR MECH ONLY)

Reviewed by journalist Mike Davis

Deore might be Shimano's workhorse mountain biking and trekking groupset but it includes features trickling down from higher up the range. The Shadow rear derailleur (a standard mech is also available) is tucked in to make it less easily damaged. It will also cope with a 36-tooth rear sprocket rather than the normal 34T max. (The nine-speed HG61 cassettes available for Deore are 11-28, 11-32, 11-34 and 12-36.)

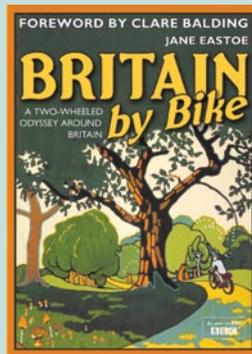
Deore's M590 chainset is the cheapest in Shimano's range to feature an outboard-bearing bottom bracket setup. Many riders find that external BBs don't last as well as the old square-taper units, but the outboard setup is easier to work on.

Shifters, mechs, brakes (disc or V)... it all works as well as you'd expect. Aside from a few extra grammes, it's hard to see where you're sacrificing performance



compared to one of Shimano's pricier groupsets. We've been happily abusing it on a mountain bike over the winter and it's been just fine. If you need solidly-performing parts on a budget, Deore should probably be your first port of call.

Details: www.madison.co.uk



Britain by Bike by Jane Eastoe £16.99

Reviewed by Victoria Hazael

Britain by Bike is the book of a TV series, due to broadcast on BBC4 in July. It follows Clare Balding as she cycles around Britain extolling the joys of cycle touring. It's inspired by books by Harold Briercliffe, with Clare even cycling six routes on his touring bike. The book includes some wonderful maps, photos, adverts and pictures detailing the history of cycle touring, although she refers to CTC in the past tense, as if the club had ceased to exist! 200pp, ISBN: 9781906388713

Ground Effect Body Bag

£56 APPROX

Reviewed by CTC member David Griffiths

The Body Bag will protect your bike when travelling by air. Unusually, you can carry it with you on tour. Most bike bags are heavily padded and so they're bulky and heavy – and impractical if you aren't flying back from where you start your tour. A CTC heavy grade polythene bag is easy to carry but only offers limited protection, especially if your journeys involve several connecting flights.

The Body Bag is strong, weighs just 1.15kg, and folds down to an A4-sized package when not in use. To pack your bike, you do need to



remove your front wheel but then you simply pad the bag with disposable cardboard etc. I used the Body Bag last year for a trip to Chile and Argentina and I couldn't have been happier with its performance.

Details: www.groundeffect.co.nz

CycleFlex gloves £30

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

These look like winter gloves but aren't: I found it too cold for them below about 5°C and they're rain resistant rather than waterproof. But on cool spring days they've been great, and they're breathable enough that you could even use them in summer for mountain biking. The close fit gives excellent dexterity, and the gel pads in the synthetic leather palms offer reasonable comfort. There's a towelling thumb, plus some reflective piping on the fingers. Overall, good mild-weather gloves. Sizes S-XL.

Details: www.outdoordesigns.co.uk



Sealskinz Lightweight Socklet

£21.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Sealskinz waterproof socks are a great last line of defence in soggy Britain. In fact, given the lack of weather resistance from most cycling shoes, they can be your only line of defence. The problem is that they're bulky. These new trainer-style ankle socks are still waterproof but are thin enough to fit in your snugest road bike shoes. In heavy rain your feet can still get wet as water runs down your legs and in the tops. Otherwise, they're really useful. Sizes: S-XL.

Details: www.sealskinz.com

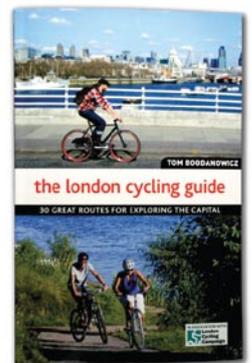


The London Cycling Guide

£10.99 Reviewed by Frances Chaloner

Tom Bogdanowicz's pocket-sized paperback outlines 30 routes around the capital. The guide is well illustrated with photographs, maps and clear, comprehensive text. Early chapters cover cycling basics, and each route is clearly set out with helpful local information. I tested the South London Commons ride and it was enjoyable and the directions accurate. It is the best cycling guide I have used and is a must have for all those who wish to explore London by bike.

224pp, ISBN: 978-1847735461



TIME ALLROAD PEDALS £50.99

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

The Time ATAC system is preferred by those who like a firmer connection between shoe and pedal than provided by Shimano.

The tension can be adjusted on some more expensive Time models, but not these multi-purpose pedals. I find them rather stiff. Whereas my SPDs engage effortlessly, with these I had to stamp down hard.

Once attached, the pedals felt good. I think the shoe does get a bit more support beyond the cleat than from most Shimano pedals, and that could well be appreciated by heavier footed riders than I. Detachment – I was

relieved to find – was much easier than clicking in.

The other side of each Allroad pedal has a surface for normal shoes or riding unclipped. It's rather slippery plastic though, and can't be replaced when it wears out. So the Time Allroad isn't ideal for clipless beginners or casual riding. If you're a strong rider who already prefers the ATAC system, and has a bike you also want to ride in normal shoes, I'd recommend paying another £23 for the Allroad Gripper, which has rubber studs on a replaceable platform, plus adjustable tension.

Details: www.chickencycles.co.uk