

Gear up!

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

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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 Hi-Viz Hump Waterproof backpack cover, worth £24.99.

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BONTRAGER RXL MTB SHOES £159.99

Reviewed by CTC Marketing Officer Jon Sharpe

I've been riding from spring through to winter in Bontrager's high-end RXL mountain bike shoes, and I'm impressed. The carbon sole is extremely stiff, which is ideal when cycling. Two Velcro straps and a ratchet buckle ensure they fit firmly, with good adjustability. Once strapped and clipped in, you soon start to feel the pedalling efficiency that high-performance shoes provide. Sole stiffness means you won't want to walk far in them, although toe studs provide purchase for jogging up muddy banks.

They come with eSoles footbed insoles. Like an orthopaedic insole, the eSole provides a customisable support for your foot, making these RXLs more comfortable than any other shoes I've ridden in. They're my first choice for all off-road rides – and for commuting to the office. Also available in more subdued black, I like the white colour; it even cleans up well.

From: your local Trek/Bontrager dealer. CTC members can get an average of 10% off – see the dealer listing at ctc.org.uk



ALIEN OCEAN ELECTRIC ASSIST KIT £549

Reviewed by CTC member Mick Davey

There comes a time in life when keeping up on rides can be an effort. We decided we needed a bit of electric assistance and bought two Alien Ocean front wheel pedelec-conversion kits. In each kit you get a built-up front wheel with a motor, a 10Ah lithium ion battery, a rear rack to carry the battery, a charger, and all necessary controls and cables.

The 250-watt motor can cope with all but the very steepest hill. Bear in mind that this is electrical assistance not your motive power; you still have to pedal.

The brakes supplied have a micro-switch to cut power before braking. The spring loaded 'throttle' fits 22mm diameter handlebars, although I mounted ours on old handlebar stems. The control box comes with each wire numbered. All you do is join

each plug with each matching socket. A pedelec sensor fits on the bottom bracket and crankset, to measure pedalling speed.

As the 700C-wheel kits had sold out, I purchased 26-inch wheel kits and built the hubs into new 700C tandem rims. The hub motor spindle has 10mm flats, and will fit the fork of any conventional bike. Front wheel removal isn't a problem: you unplug the power lead and loosen the (oversize) wheelnuts.

The Li-ion battery provides assistance for 40-60 miles, depending on terrain and usage. If you run out of power, the extra weight feels like you're carrying a touring load. Otherwise, it's a real godsend having power when you need it. Crucially, this kit keeps you riding on your own bike.

From: alienocean.co.uk



BANJO BROS MEDIUM MESSENGER BAG £64.95

Reviewed by Cycle Champion Martyn Bolt

With its diagonal retaining strap and easily adjustable shoulder strap, this durable courier bag sits stably on your back. At 18 litres, it's large enough for a laptop (padded pouch provided), files, and folders; the handle on top underscores its go-to-work aspirations. There are plenty of pockets, plus a loop for an LED light. More reflective piping and/or a lighter colour would be nice for commuting. The ballistic nylon fabric is rain resistant but not completely waterproof. Your back gets a bit hot while riding, but this is a versatile utility bag.

From: urbanhunter.biz

Endura Singletrack 3/4 £59.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Three-quarter shorts can ride up over the knee or be so long they're like hobbit's trousers. These are just right. The knee is 'articulated' with stretch fabric and the close cut is spot on for cycling. There's no seat pad so they're best over lycra shorts. Features include five pockets and reflective piping. Comfortable and durable, I've used them year round for mountain biking and day tours. S-XXL, plus women's.

From: endura.co.uk



SHIMANO MW80 SHOES £149.99

Reviewed by CTC and AUK member Ian Booth

After many years of cold feet, trying various socks, shoe covers etc, I got a pair of Shimano MW80 shoes last winter. It was one of the worst ever for cycling but my feet stayed toasty and dry – despite me only ever wearing medium-weight walking socks. The Gore-Tex does a great job. The only time they got damp was in heavy rain when water ran in the top. The shoes have an effective thermal lining too, making them too hot for summer. I got the MTB version (there is a road version, the RW80) and have used them off-road and on. The MW80 provides a good grip for walking. Available in sizes 40-48, I bought size 45 (one size up; I'm a 44) as I have wide feet and wanted room to wiggle my toes. They're easy to keep clean too. Highly recommended for cold-weather riding.

From: madison.co.uk



Giro 100 Proof gloves £59.99 Heat Holder Thermal Socks £6

Reviewed by CTC Senior Development Officer Adam Coffman

With borderline Reynaud's Syndrome, I suffer badly with cold hands and feet. The Giro 100 Proof gloves use a lobster design that's warmer than separate fingers, yet at several degrees below zero the tips of my fingers still went white. Only Moose Mitts, which fit to the handlebar, have fully worked for me – see trails-edge.com. The Heat Holder Thermal Socks did keep my feet warm. They're bulky but a bargain.

From: madison.co.uk and sockshop.co.uk



PROVIZ ELECTROLUMINESCENT JACKET £69.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

The distinguishing feature of this loose-cut waterproof polyester jacket is its gimmicky electroluminescent lighting: four thin strips lit constantly, flashing or not at all by 4 AAA batteries in a small control box in an inside breast pocket. In darkness these strips stand out. Under any illumination, as the camera flash shows – and as car headlights would too – they become invisible next to the highly reflective trim. The merely reflective Proviz jacket is better, being £14 cheaper and machine washable. This isn't so it will soon smell, despite it's pit zips and vented back. Sizes: S-XL, plus women's.

From: todaycyclist.co.uk





BELL MUNI HELMET & ACCESSORIES

£59.99+ (£114.97 as tested)

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Aimed primarily at utility cyclists, Bell's Muni has a set of optional accessories: Blackburn Flea front and rear LED lights (£44.99/pr) and a Metropolis Flip Mirror (£9.99). Two more LED flashers are fixed to the helmet cradle. It's this cradle that is the Muni's weak point.

While the ratcheting chin buckle is excellent, there's otherwise little adjustment for fit on this one-size-for-all helmet (54-61cm). You can move the cradle's mounting points in the helmet, but the cradle itself uses non-adjustable elasticated straps. I've got an average-sized head and found it fine for one hour and uncomfortable after three. Yet my wife liked the women's version, the Arella. So try before you buy.

It conforms to CPSC and EN1708 standards and is well enough vented. I seldom wear a helmet for utility cycling, but was glad of this during a month of icy roads. And it wasn't too hot or heavy (352g with

accessories) for strenuous cycling.

The tiny folding mirror is a useful supplement to over-the-shoulder glances, though it fogged up in the cold. The field of view is limited compared to a handlebar mirror, and you need to fine tune it each trip. However, it was good for keeping an eye out for upcoming traffic and checking on tail-enders.

The 4-LED, 17-gram Flea lights can alternatively fit the handlebar/seatpost on Velcro straps. They're very bright. Blackburn claim a maximum of 40 lumens for the front on its Overdrive setting. It's enough to see by at lower speeds. Runtimes are about 6 hours steady and 12 hours flashing for the rear, and half that for the front – or an hour on Overdrive. The Li-ion batteries charge in 90 minutes via the Flea's tiny USB charger. (A solar charger costs £19.99.) As auxiliary or emergency lights, they're great.

From: madison.co.uk



Cycle shorts



Adventure Cycle-Touring Handbook

£14.99

Reviewed by Mark Waters

Aimed primarily at the expedition cyclist, the second edition of this 300-page guide covers equipment, planning, health, transporting your bike, and provides numerous route outlines – Asia featuring heavily. Travelogues from the book's contributing authors provide inspiration, as do the 16 pages of terrific colour photos. Very useful for cyclists going further afield. trailblazer-guides.com, ISBN 9781905864256

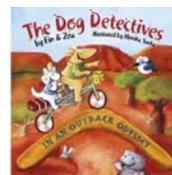


Cyclepedia

£19.95

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

This is a compendium of 97 iconic bicycle designs, with each getting good photography, a bit of back-story and an abridged specification. It's an idiosyncratic collection – the Swedish Itera? Two Bob Jacksons but no Hetchins? – but still an enjoyable coffee-table book to dip into. Would make a good gift. thamesandhudson.com, ISBN 9780500515587



The Dog Detectives: An Outback Odyssey

£5.99

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

Written by two world cycle-tourers travelling with their dogs, this children's book series features said dogs as cycling detectives. This Australian-based story is okay, though unlikely to be treasured like Nick Butterworth's Percy the Park Keeper. But the art's quite nice, the fact section interesting, and maybe it'll help normalise cycling in youngsters' minds? maverickbooks.co.uk, ISBN 9781848860629