

GEAR UP



GARMIN EDGE TOURING PLUS

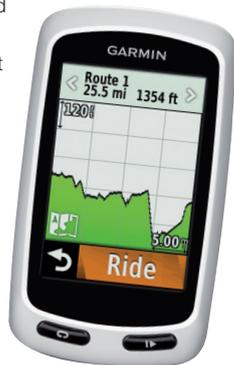
£225

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

Edge Touring is Garmin's bid to deliver a true cycling satnav. It's the same hardware as an Edge 800 but with different software. Satnav is only as good as the mapping. And there's the cyclist's perennial problem: how to get reliable information on tracks and paths? Here Garmin have relied upon the crowd-sourced data of the Open Street Map project which, like Wikipedia, is neither complete nor entirely accurate!

There may also be problems with the interpretation of this data. Garmin seem to have assumed everything described as a cycling route is good for all cyclists. When I set the Edge Touring to avoid not only 'narrow trails' but also 'unpaved roads', it directed me onto muddy bridleways and grotty gravel paths! I don't mind a bit of mud and gravel, but I know cyclists who do. For them to get sensible routes out of the Edge Touring, they'll need to load it with different maps. This is easy to do: change the micro-SD card for another. Some retailers are bundling the Edge Touring with GB Discoverer mapping, which uses OS data – at a cost.

It is also possible to load a previously ridden or planned



gpx 'track' into the NewFiles folder of the Edge Touring's memory. When switched on, the device will convert this into a 'course', attempt to match it up with its mapping and provide satnav instructions. How closely those instructions stick to your planned track again depends upon how closely the mapping corresponds with reality – and whether its avoidance settings match your plan. The original track nevertheless remains on-screen, so if necessary you can follow it visually, ignoring the other purple line and its suggestions to go a different way!

I tested the Edge Touring Plus, which extra to the £178 plain version has a barometer, a thermometer and can receive data from Ant+ heart monitors and e-bikes. The barometer enables more accurate altitude logging.

Like the sporty Edges, the Touring has an integral rechargeable battery that cannot be swapped out if you are unable (or forget) to charge it. That can happen on tour, so tourists tend to prefer an Etrex for its swappable batteries and versatility. But versatile means complicated, and the Edge Touring (or Touring Plus) is much simpler to use than either an Etrex or the sporty Edges. It nevertheless provides all the guidance a cyclist needs – given good enough mapping. garmin.com

SUBMIT A REVIEW

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FUZE WHEEL WRITER

£19.99

Reviewed by CTC Senior Press Officer Laura Raymond and son

'Cool' was the verdict of 11-year-old Michael. It's always a nice surprise when reasonably low-priced toys actually work. The Wheel Writer fixes to the spokes of a bike wheel 20-inches or larger, and its LED lights display one of 12 images – or the speed in mph – as the wheel spins. The child cycling doesn't get to see the effect, but it's a fun gadget as long as family or friends can watch and go 'ooh' and 'ahh'. Fitting isn't too difficult although the two-piece magnet can fall apart; a screw fitting would be better. We used gaffer tape. The Wheel Writer is powered by three AAA batteries. It's visible in daylight and shows up well in the dark. It's not a replacement for bike lights, of course. fuzeuk.com



TRP HYRD BRAKES

£109.99 each

Review by journalist Steve Worland
For HyRd, read 'Hydraulic Road'. So far I'd say these are the best cable pull disc brakes available, mainly because they contain hydraulic pistons as part of the calliper design. This makes them heavier and bulkier than other cable disc brakes but the payoff is more power, a lighter pull action and better modulation than any of the all-mechanical cable units I've tried. There's no obvious fade on long descents. They're simple to fit and they work with any conventional drop-bar brake lever. So while they're more costly than most cable pull offerings, they're a much cheaper option than the all-hydraulic road brakes coming from

Shimano, SRAM and Campagnolo.

After about 500 trail and road miles, the pads are barely worn. Both pistons move and they will remain centred over the rotor even when they do wear.

Weight: calliper 196g, rotor 94g.
upgradebikes.co.uk



BIKERAY IV

£109.90

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

High-power lights are available online (e.g. eBay) for tens of pounds. Why pay over £100? Because it's not just about lumens per pound. The spread and reach of that light is important, as is run-time and reliability. This BikeRay IV worked faultlessly, despite rain, mud, vibration, and hitting the ground twice when I crashed. High or low power, the light spread is like 'full beam' so is better off-road than on.

Claimed maximum output is 1500 lumens. Four Cree XP-G LEDs are powered by a 6.6Ah battery – actually six 18650 Li-ions packaged together in a padded case. Run-time is quoted as 4 1/2 hours on high,

which is plausible; it had power remaining

after 3-3 1/2 hour test rides. On 600-lumen low-power it should last over 13 hours. The lamp's on/off switch shows the charge remaining, shining green, blue or red.

The lamp fixes to the handlebar or supplied helmet mount via a rubber O-ring (in a choice of sizes). It was fairly stable; there's a rubber gripper underneath and the lamp is only 134g. The 308g battery case has a strap to attach it to the stem or top tube, or can go in a pocket if you use its extension cable. It comes with a 4-hour smart charger and a 12-month warranty. While I prefer Gemini's tiny Xera (Feb-Mar 13) as a helmet lamp, the bigger BikeRay IV is brighter and even better value. It's well worth considering as your primary mountain biking light. lightslightslights.co.uk



ALPKIT STINGRAY FRAMEBAG

£65

Reviewed by CTC Marketing Manager David Dowling

Carrying anything beyond the most minimal kit on a mountain bike has never been easy. Even if you can fit them, panniers stick out, low-riders get knocked off, bar bags hide the front wheel, and they all impact handling. Enter the Stingray. If you carry your water elsewhere, this frame-bag makes great use of the frame's front triangle. Alpkit take a cardboard template, which you cut out, and provide a bag to those dimensions. There are options for separators, document pockets, and you can select a few widths so as not to foul the pedals. In use, as long as you pack to avoid protrusions, the load is almost unnoticeable. Combine the bag with a saddlebag or add a little weight on your back and options for off-road touring start to open up. Alpkit hope to appeal to commuters and roadies as well, but off-road is where this product excels. alpkit.com

EXPOSURE TRACE & TRACER

£94.95 pair, £49.95 each

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

I still use an Exposure Flare I tested years ago as it's so bright and weatherproof, but

it has a few issues. It needs a separate charger; it occasionally switches itself off; and the silicone-strap bracket can rotate on the seatpost. The new TraceR improves on the Flare, as the Trace front lamp does on the Flash. A press-switch gives a definite on/off and there's a USB port for charging. The bracket issue remains, more so for TraceR; I'd bodge it with zip-ties. The lamps are excellent. They're compact (57mm), light (39g), well-made, and very visible – even from the side. The rear emits 75 lumens, the front 110. You can see the pulsing modes in daylight. Run time is 3-24 hours.

USE also sent me their new Sirius Mk 2 front lamp (£109.95, 360 lumens, 84g) and Blaze rear lamp (£99.95, 80 lumens, 45g). Both are very good, if pricy, but also use the one-size-sort-of-fits-all silicone straps that I'm not a fan of. use1.com





ALDI WINTER CYCLING GEAR

£varies

Reviewed by Dan Cook, CTC Lead Officer – Training & Education Offroad
Aldi do batch sales of budget cycling accessories and clothing. You need to keep your eyes peeled for when they're in store. On test here is their winter jacket (£15.99), tights (£13.99) and under-helmet cap (£4.99). They're generously sized, so try on if possible. Women's sizes are available.

The jacket is excellent: well cut and shaped, with a high neck, decent zip and reflective detailing. It's very warm,

with wind-resistant material and four big pockets (one zipped). The cap is good too. It has a neat, fold-down section at the back, and it kept my head warm without overheating.

The tights (waist, not bib) are less good. They're made of decent materials but they only just stayed in position. The seat pad is positioned too far forward, so lacked padding at the back and shape/support at the front. But they'll do the job if you need change from £14. aldi.co.uk



CARRADICE DUXBACK OVERSHOES

£15

Reviewed by CTC member Chris Reed

Carradice's Duxback overshoes are made from the same wax-coated cotton duck material that they make their bags out of, only thinner. They slip over the toe of street shoes (or cycling shoes/boots), with an elastic strap mid-sole and Velcro closure at the rear. They are a bit flappy by overshoe standards so are easy to get on and off. They are also very waterproof, although the loose fit around the leg can let heavy rain in the tops if you don't fit waterproof trousers over them. The toe piece can get frayed by walking, but Carradice will repair them. My first pair lasted nearly five years. I'm on my second pair now and won't hesitate to buy more. Sizes are medium (4-7) or large (8-11). carradice.co.uk

CATEYE VOLT 300 & VOLT 50 SET

£89.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

The numbers are lumens: 300 for the front, 50 for the rear. The lamps use the same USB rechargeable Li-ion battery, so the rear lasts longer: eight hours constant (and up to 20 flashing) versus three hours for the front on high power, its most useful setting. The trick is that you can unscrew the lamps' battery cartridges and swap them to eke out power. I never had to.

The lamps are 115g each and are built to last. That's just as well. If you neglect to slide them fully home on the brackets, as I did several times, they only look attached and will fall off into the road. The default rear bracket fits the saddle rails, so is no good if, like me, you ever use a saddlebag. Seatpost and helmet brackets are available, but I'd just get the front light by itself (£49.99); it's a capable commuter lamp with a good enough beam for riding on unlit lanes. The rear is okay but, depending on the bike, I'd prefer a Cateye LD610, B&M 4D Toplight, or an Exposure TraceR (plus zip ties). zyro.co.uk



THE RULES, BY THE VELOMINATI

£12.99 hardback

Reviewed by Dan Cook, CTC Lead Officer – Training & Education Offroad

Rule #1: Obey the rules... This Fight Club of a book reflects the various writers' (hopefully tongue in cheek) views of the previously unwritten rules of cycling. It's a distillation of the 'rules' and discussion on the velominati.com website. For example, Rule #12: 'The

correct number of bikes to own is n+1 where n is the number of bikes currently owned.' Although they might not all be identical to the unwritten rules you have, there will be some similarities, and this book is worth a read if only to laugh at the reflection of ourselves and our opinions of others we ride with, or see out riding. Recommended for those fully embedded in the sportier side of cycling.

hodder.co.uk

