

# GEAR UP

Components, kit, and accessories reviewed by specialist journalists, CTC staff – and you.

**This issue:** bags, jeans, books, and more

REVIEW OF THE MONTH



- PROS**
- + Simple & stable
  - + Good value
- CONS**
- Not 100% waterproof

## Apidura MID-SIZE SADDLE PACK & COMPACT HANDLEBAR PACK

£85 & £65

apidura.com

**LIGHTWEIGHT TOURING** is all about attaching the minimum of luggage to your bicycle to maximise the riding experience. Modern seat packs and bar harnesses eschew racks, thus keeping weight down.

Apidura's 9-litre compact handlebar pack is designed for lightweight, highly-compressible items. I stuffed in a 2-season down sleeping bag. It can be opened at both ends using roll-top closures. It attaches to the bike more simply than any front bag I've used: two straps secure it firmly under the bar, without compressing cables. I tried it on a

drop-bar bike too but it was a tight fit and made changing gear with STIs awkward.

The mid-size saddle pack is also easy to attach. It's held solidly in place by two reinforced seatpost straps and an easily adjustable under-saddle strap. The pack has a 14-litre capacity. I squeezed in an ultralight tent, an air mat, a meths stove, and some food. Off-road, there was little discernible sway. Reinforcements within the pack help it to keep its shape and aid clearance above the rear wheel. The roll-top rear makes gear easily accessible and enables the bag to adapt to the shape of its contents.

Both bags are constructed from a tough waterproof fabric, although the seams and stitching can admit water in downpours. Useful additions include a rear light attachment and luggage elastics for extra kit. In summary: great value, well-designed bikepacking bags.

Dave Barter



## SUBMIT A REVIEW

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## Peter Edwards Mountain Biking on the North Downs

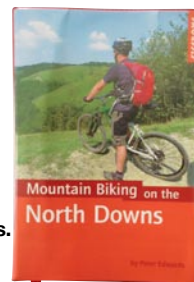
£14.95

cicerone.co.uk

**THE NORTH Downs** is a paradise for mountain bikers, with a vast area of bridleways and tracks.

From Dover in the east to Farnham in the west, there are miles of wonderful trails, both manmade and 'natural'. Many riders head to the honeypot Hurtwood area around Peaslake in Surrey but, with much of this woodland due to be sold off soon, this book should come in useful for encouraging people to explore other parts of the South East. With 20 routes between 18.5km and 59km in length and graded for difficulty, the guide is suitable for those with at least some technical ability and fitness, although the 59km Downs Link is a family-friendly route. Many people use Garmins and the like for route-finding these days but this book offers so much more, with practical advice and extra information, as well as OS map extracts. ISBN 9781852847029.

Julie Rand



» **Exposure**  
**LINK PLUS £79.95**

[ultimatesportsengineering.com](http://ultimatesportsengineering.com)

**HAVING BEEN** involved with Exposure lights right at the very beginning, it's been interesting to see how their lights are evolving. The Link Plus is an all-in-one unit, shining both front and rear, that is designed to be helmet mounted. At 76g, it's scarcely noticeable when fitted. It's aimed at the commuter who wants additional visibility. Being high up, it is readily noticeable. It's really bright (150 lumens front, 45 rear) and it's easy to use with and without gloves. Charging is via a micro USB port, which is handy for recharging at your computer.



- PROS**  
+ Well made  
+ Lightweight
- CONS**  
- Somewhat expensive

The settings enable you to have various combinations of both, or either, lights turned to constant or strobing outputs. Run time is good (Exposure quote up to 72 hours, depending on mode), and the light comes with a battery indicator so you know when it's time to recharge. If your commute finds you in busy towns or cities, then this easy-to-use, well made, super-bright light is a useful supplement to your main lights. It gave me peace of mind that I wouldn't be overlooked by other road users.

*Jon Sharpe*

**Helly Hansen**  
**Dry Stripe Crew Base Layer £30**

[hellyhansen.com](http://hellyhansen.com)

**A GOOD** base layer should help keep your skin dry by wicking moisture away as you exercise. This enables your skin to cool by evaporation when it is hot and, conversely, stay warm when it is cold as you don't have a wet layer next to your skin to chill you. Helly Hansen's 100% polypropylene base, with its distinctive striped sleeves, has been around for decades. I find the fit to be very good, with the fabric stretching well to stay in skin contact. The shirt is long enough to stay tucked in and it wicks effectively. Some riders refer to Hellys as 'smelly Hansen' and complain that the fabric can start to smell after heavy use. This is not a problem that I have experienced, and the garments wash effectively at 30 degrees, coming out of the machine almost dry enough to wear. At £30 a time, they are not cheap but they do last for years. As a dependable, easy care and good value base layer, the Helly Hansen is hard to fault – just don't dry it in front of an open fire; it can melt!

*CTC member William Wake*



- PROS**  
+ Wicks moisture well  
+ Lasts for years
- CONS**  
- Can melt!

- PROS**  
+ Comfortable  
+ Tough
- CONS**  
- Sizing/cut



**Endura**  
**URBAN JEAN £79.99**

[endura.co.uk](http://endura.co.uk)

**LIKE THE** Swrve jeans I reviewed in the Dec-Jan issue, these Endura ones blend cotton with Cordura for durability and have some stretch for unrestricted pedalling. They're cut close at the calves so they don't flap. Compared to normal jeans, there's an extra gusset panel so you don't sit on a seam. This is comfortable but, unlike the Swrve jeans, seems to make the jeans hang a little differently from normal jeans when you're off the bike. That might have been the sizing, however, which is generous; I found even the 32in Small loose. The belt I needed (not shown) made the waist D-lock loop awkward. Stitching and overall durability is excellent – better than the Swrves, which I've repaired once. If you roll up the right leg, it reveals reflective details. There's more on a pull-out flap in one of the rear pockets. These are durable jeans for use on the bike and off. Do try for size before buying. Sizes: S-XXL (men's only).

*Dan Joyce*



**Tom Perkins**  
**SPICES AND SPANDEX** £24.95

[thenomadickitchen.com](http://thenomadickitchen.com)

WITHOUT ANY preparation, Tom left home and cycled through Europe to the Middle East and then down the length of Africa. Relying on the hospitality of strangers, he and fellow traveller Matt Chennells enjoyed the simple but hearty meals the locals ate. On his return, Tom assembled their recipes into this book. The dishes use ingredients that are easily available in the UK and are simple to recreate. But Spices and Spandex is more than just another cook book. Alongside the colour photos of the meals themselves, there are also beautiful images and descriptions of the people and landscapes they encountered en route. Some eccentric spellings and typos only add to the book's homespun charm.

ISBN 9780993164903.

Julie Rand



**Vincita**  
**BROMPTON TRANSPORT BAG & GARMENT BAG**

£119.99 & £49.99

[southdownsdistribution.com](http://southdownsdistribution.com)

VINCITA'S BROMPTON Transport Bag, which is also marketed as the Sightseer, is designed for use as checked luggage when travelling on a 'plane. It'll also work as carry-on luggage on a Eurostar-style train. Your Brompton fits inside with room for the garment bag to be slung over the folded bike. This provides a handy way to pack your clothes in the same package and gives the Brompton protection from baggage handlers. The bag's plastic runners and luggage wheels help with rigidity and transportation. With the bike, and ideally the Garment Bag removed, the Transport Bag can be strapped to a Brompton rear rack, although it's bulky. It's more portable than an empty hard case, however, and still offers reasonable protection to a Brompton in transit.

Jon Sharpe

- PROS**
- + Garment bag is useful
  - + Bulky when folded
- CONS**
- Fairly expensive



- PROS**
- + Holds phone securely
  - + Minimalist design
- CONS**
- Showerproof only

**Quad Lock**  
**BIKE MOUNT (IPHONE 5)** £44.99

[quadlockcase.com](http://quadlockcase.com)

THERE ARE lots of mounts to fix smartphones to your bike for navigation or ride logging. This, I think, is the best. It's simple, secure, and lightweight. A case made of polyurethane and polycarbonate fits over the back and sides of the phone, leaving the upper face and all ports free. The protective case includes a recessed mount; the phone will still fit neatly in your pocket. The bike mount works a bit like Garmin's, except that there's a sprung collar holding the phone in place so the twist-fit mount is more secure. You can nevertheless fit and remove the phone in seconds with one hand, and can orient it portrait or landscape. The bike mount – there are lots of others available – fits to the handlebar or stem with rubber O-rings or cable ties. The one weak point is the 'weather resistant' cover that's provided; I found that some moisture got under it in persistent rain, fortunately not damaging the phone. With a waterproof bike case, the Quad Lock would be perfect. Models are available for a wide variety of phones.

Dan Joyce