

# GEAR UP

Components, kit, accessories and books reviewed by specialist journalists and CTC staff

**This issue:** classic shoes and a gearing solution

REVIEW  
OF THE  
MONTH



#### PROS

- + Beautiful
- + Comfortable

#### CONS

- Expensive

**Dromarti**

## RACE SHOE £223.70

dromarti.com

**FINALLY, I'VE DONE IT:** I've got a pair of shoes more expensive than my wife's. Sssh, don't tell her! This might be the point where some of you will say: '£223.70 for a pair of cycling shoes? Pah!' Yet there are quite a few bike shoes on the market for around this price, so perhaps that's not too outrageous. Bear in mind also that the merino wool jersey I wore to complete the look was £120. And don't mention the shorts.

Having been lured to these by a newfound love of retro bikes, only fuelled further by my weekend with CTC at Eroica Britannia, I was perhaps guilty of having created a fairytale image in my head of an artisan shoemaker hunched over his last while sipping grappa in a piazza in Italy. So I was surprised to see the 'Made in Taiwan' tag that I would expect to see with mass-market alternatives. My disappointment was assuaged by the waft of new leather, the beautiful looks and exquisite stitching. And who knows? They might drink grappa in Taiwan...

These shoes hark back to the days of Bobet, Coppi et al. They have holes drilled into the leather for ventilation, a padded leather heel, and they're fastened by laces. Laces! How refreshing not to have to twiddle with buckles, ratchets and

plasticky bits. But this isn't a case of style over substance. The shoes are contemporary too, with a stiff composite sole, heel and toe pad, and drillings for Look cleats. I went for the traditional road cleats to fit my quill-and-strap retro pedals, and they work well. I just have to remember whether I'm on clipless or straps when I come to traffic lights.

In these days of modern shoes with leatherette/nylon uppers (or whatever new material is out there), leather remains genuinely viable. It offers a range of real benefits. It's durable, breathable and polishable. Importantly for cycling shoes, leather is also naturally mouldable. After a month or so of weekend riding, the leather has stretched to fit my foot – not exactly like a *glove*, but very well. They are supremely comfortable, with a padded tongue and a soft leather lining. Being lace-ups, I can secure them snugly to my feet, so there's no moving or lifting of the foot at the heel when I'm riding out of the saddle.

The Race model also comes in black leather with a jazzy contrasting red stitching. There is a Sportivo model with an MTB-style sole and recessed two-bolt cleat fixings.

**Matt Mallinder, CTC Membership Director** »

## REVIEW REQUESTS

Is there a product that you would like Cycle to review? Let us know and we'll consider it.

**WRITE TO:** Gear Up,  
PO Box 313, Scarborough,  
YO12 6WZ

**EMAIL:** [editor@ctc.org.uk](mailto:editor@ctc.org.uk)

## Other options



### 1) GIRO REPUBLIC LX £150

Handsome brown leather upper and nylon sole. Takes recessed SPD cleats, so you can walk in them easily. [giro.com](http://giro.com)



### 2) REYNOLDS CLASSIC ROAD SHOE (BROWN) £169

Leather upper and sole with resin stiffener to allow efficient pedalling without flex. [reynolds-england.com](http://reynolds-england.com)

» Lindarets

# ROADLINK \$31.95

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

**THE LINDARETS ROADLINK** is designed to relocate a Shimano 10- or 11-speed road rear derailleur so it will work with a sprocket with up to 40 teeth. This, in turn, is designed to allow the installation of a currently-fashionable single chainring wide-ratio transmission, the only cost being the RoadLink, an MTB cassette and a couple of extra chain links. So far, so good: there will be cyclists wanting exactly this outcome.

There will be others who, like me, find appealing the idea of using of a rear sprocket much larger than that for which a given rear mech is designed. Rear derailleur performance is governed by its capacity, or the amount of excess chain it can take up, and by the clearance available between the upper jockey wheel and the teeth of the largest sprocket. Too large a sprocket, and the jockey wheel will bear against its teeth through the chain rollers, rumbling as the chain moves. The RoadLink simply moves the mech away from the wheel centre to provide the clearance for a bigger sprocket.

As stated, this can be as large as 40 teeth. A short-arm mech may accommodate a range of around 33 teeth, which covers the 29T range of an 11-40 cassette. The problem of capacity crops up when trying to use more than one chainring. Add the difference of 16T between the chainrings of a compact chainset and a short arm mech can't cope; the chain will sag on some smaller sprocket combinations. For this reason, double



chainsets are only 'supported' with mid- or long-cage rear mechs, while triple chainsets are not supported at all.

### SUPERSIZE YOUR CASSETTE

So long as you avoid excessive crossover at either end of the gear range ('large-large' and 'small-small' combinations), a Shimano Ultegra 11-speed long-arm rear mech with a nominal capacity of 37T and an official maximum sprocket size of 32T will, with the RoadLink, handle an 11-40 cassette and 50-34 chainrings. A short-arm mech is more limited; check capacity and sprocket/chainring combinations before use, or avoid combos that lead to chain sag.

This leaves the question of the chain between the upper jockey wheel and the underside of the sprocket. The length of this section affects shift speed and precision; the shorter, the better. The parallelogram of an MTB rear mech is slanted more steeply than that of a road mech to match the 'cone' of the MTB cassette. The design of the RoadLink partly alleviates the mismatch between a road mech and MTB cassette by tweaking the 'hang' angle of the mech

### SHIFTING PERFORMANCE

Comprising a hard-anodised 6061 aluminium alloy body and stainless steel bolt, the RoadLink is easy to install. It may only require lengthening the chain by a couple of links, depending on cassette size. Lindarets warns that the link may not fit all hangers, but it should be possible to file any recalcitrant example to fit.

I tested the RoadLink on a 10-speed Ultegra transmission with short-arm mech, 50-34 chainrings and 11-34 cassette. Performance was indistinguishable from a standard setup with a 12-27 cassette, the shift proving crisp and precise across the range. It is not clear that the 'support' limitations noted by the manufacturer – SRAM and Campagnolo drivetrains miss out – necessarily apply, in that any rear mech that fits a standard dropout hanger will fit the RoadLink. I installed a SRAM Rival mech on the RoadLink with no problem, and there's no obvious reason why it wouldn't allow a nine-speed Shimano road mech to work with, say, an Alivio MTB cassette.

In any case, the RoadLink makes 10- and 11-speed Shimano road transmissions an attractive proposition for cyclists wanting very low gearing and as such gets a double thumbs-up.

*Richard Hallett, Cycle's Technical Editor*

- PROS**

  - + Much lower gearing
  - + Impressive shifting

**CONS**

  - Leverage on hanger

### Other options



**1) JTEK SHIFTMATE £29.99**  
Allows the use of non-matching gearing components e.g. Shimano 10-speed STI lever with Dyna-Sys MTB rear mech.  
[jtekengineering.com](http://jtekengineering.com), [sjscycles.co.uk](http://sjscycles.co.uk)



**2) SRAM DOUBLE-TAP DUAL CONTROL LEVERS £VARIOUS**  
These work with SRAM mountain bike rear mechs and cassettes. [sram.com](http://sram.com), [fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://fisheroutdoor.co.uk)



- PROS**
- + Easy to set up
  - + Good performance
- CONS**
- Needs regular cable adjustment in some conditions

» **TRP**  
**SPYKE** £79.99  
 upgrade.co.uk

**THE MECHANICAL** disc brake market has long been commandeered by Avid's BB7. Its only real shortcomings are its plasticky adjustment knobs, the awkwardness in setting it up due to its single-piston calliper, and uneven pad wear – unless the pads are positioned just right. Enter TRP's Spyke, a dual-piston mechanical disc calliper with a chunky metal build.

Like the BB7, the Spyke is operated with linear pull V-brake levers (drop bar users should check out the TRP Spyre) and standard brake cables. Where it differs from the BB7 is the ease with which it can be set up and adjusted. Being a dual-piston brake, the pads are spaced equally either side of the disc. As a result, the Spykes are less prone to rubbing than single-piston brakes, and they wear more evenly too.

**MONGOLIAN TOURING**

Build quality is excellent. After months of use, both on tour in Mongolia and mountain biking back home, both callipers still look as good as new. The Spykes include a dust and grime guard that helps keep the discs and pads cleaner and quieter. The pads are Shimano Deore compatible, so you can find spares the world over.

Compared to a rim brake, the benefit isn't more power as such but rather superior all-season performance – regardless of the state of your rims. Overseas tourers should also take note: high-quality rims with braking surfaces are becoming harder to find these days, making mechanical disc brakes all the more appealing.

In use, the Spykes have ample power with good modulation. I'd recommend

compressionless outer cables, as mechanical disc brakes can feel spongy otherwise. My only concern is that the cable needs more regular adjustment than a BB7's. This has only been an issue for me over long, rough descents, where I've needed to stop and make quick turns of the barrel adjuster. This isn't due to rapid pad wear, as I'm still on my original set. I put it down to the pads retracting slightly under intense vibration, or the callipers being sensitive to the smallest amounts of wear. I've also noticed the Spyke's calliper sitting very close to the spokes on one or two bikes, though this wasn't a problem for me.

In all other ways, the Spykes have been great performers. Perhaps reflecting their stout build, they're aren't cheap at £79.99 each. This is comparable to Shimano's excellent hydraulic SLX brake, not that that's necessarily recommended for touring. The price doesn't include levers, although the odds are that you have a set to recycle.

*Cass Gilbert, expedition cyclist*



**Other options**



**1) AVID BB7 MTN £60**  
 Both pistons can be adjusted on Avid's benchmark brake. This is the linear-pull version. There's also a BB7 Road.  
[sram.com](http://sram.com), [fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://fisheroutdoor.co.uk)



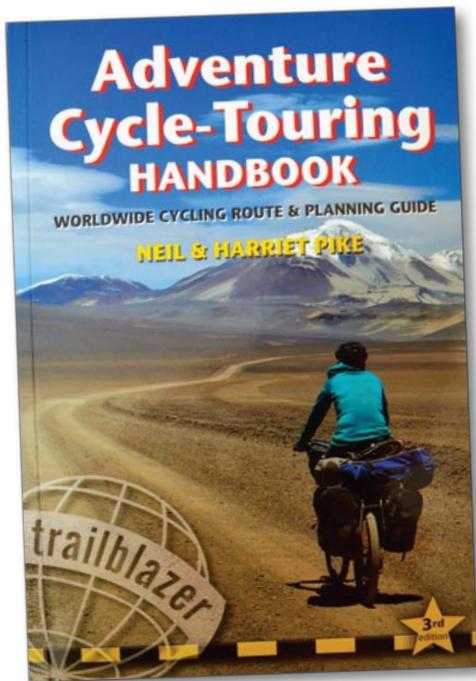
**2) SHIMANO DEORE M416 £29.99**  
 Good value single-piston mechanical calliper from Shimano. [shimano.com](http://shimano.com), [madison.co.uk](http://madison.co.uk)



REVIEWS

# BOOKS

*A round-up of the latest cycling-related reads*



**Neil & Harriet Pike**  
**ADVENTURE CYCLE-TOURING HANDBOOK** £15.99

[adventurecycle-touringhandbook.com](http://adventurecycle-touringhandbook.com)

IT'S THE JOURNEY that matters, as the saying goes. For many cyclists, the first step of that journey is the planning. Now in its 3rd edition, Neil and Harriet's wanderlust experience is a source of much reassurance. This handbook is a real bible for adventure cyclists who are looking for advice or inspiration for their next tour. It's packed with practical info: choosing the right bike for the terrain or length of journey; luggage setups; health and visa advice; and more. There are routes to pore over for every continent, along with first-hand top tips from the authors – like how to transport your bike by yak.

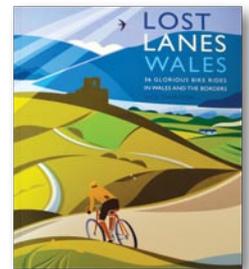
Much like this magazine's Travellers' Tales, there are also stories of cyclists' journeys, all narrated with a pinch of humour, inspiration and adventure. These help fire the imagination and serve to ground the advice with real-world examples. Most of us won't have months or years to dedicate to worldwide travel, which the advice here would equip you for, but there is also plenty of advice and routes for less ambitious but more work- and family-friendly holidays. I will revisit this handbook over the next few months as next summer's riding plans become formed.

*Matt Mallinder*

**Jack Thurston**  
**LOST LANES WALES** £14.99

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

WITH CHRISTMAS around the corner, I can see several copies of this book winging its way to my cycling friends. It's a wonderfully approachable book, with rides for cyclists of all abilities to enjoy on or off-road. The well-written routes are adorned with lush pictures (all strangely sunny for Wales!) and each has a downloadable .gpx file for those who forsake maps. It has tips for everything from wild swimming and camping to gourmet dining and pubs. I've not had a chance to explore the routes yet, but I'm inspired. Come spring, I will be heading off to make trails in Wales. *Sam Jones*



**Anna Hughes**  
**EAT, SLEEP, CYCLE** £8.99

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

THIS LOVELY, gentle book describes Anna Hughes's 4,000 mile journey around the coast of the UK mainland over 10 weeks. She starts and ends in London, travelling through places that are a mixture of the familiar and unknown. Her pleasure in the small details, like a decent plate of fish and chips and a bracing dip in the North Sea, is evident, as is the feeling that cycling connects you to people and places. So many cycle touring books focus on epic journeys in faraway places but Anna's story made me feel that travelling around my own country could be an adventure too. You can find out more about Anna's trip at [annacycles.co.uk](http://annacycles.co.uk). *Suzanne Forup*

**Simon Warren**  
**CYCLING CLIMBS OF SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND** £8.99

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

SIXTY OF THE must do 'cols' of the South East are listed in this pocket guide. It covers the Chilterns, Essex, the Kent Weald, Hants, the Surrey Downs, both Sussexes, and London. Each climb is rated out of ten, with photo, target time, gradient and length. There's also a 'how to' for each ascent, plus a location map. I'm pleased that Simon Warren has given Box Hill a mere 3/10; more impressive climbs in the vicinity now get a look-in. Locals can attest to Barhatch Lane in Cranleigh (rated 9/10) being the hardest climb in the South East. *Matt Mallinder*

