

Group test

MUDGUARDS



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Technical Editor

Even for road bikes, mudguards are an off-season essential. Technical Editor **Richard Hallett** reviews four pairs



STAY-FIXING BRACKETS

Usually fitted to the underside, where they impede water drainage and can cause it to spill out of the side.

INSTALLATION

Full-length conventional mudguards need to be firmly attached at several points. Many road bikes lack the clearance and fittings for mudguards; if it's only the latter, P-clips can be used instead.

RIGIDITY

Mudguards flex due to road vibration. Flex eventually leads to fracture and can allow the guard or its fixtures to rub the tyre, making a noise if nothing else.

REAR REFLECTOR

A red rear reflector is required between dusk and dawn, and the rear mudguard is a convenient location on a road bike. The only other option may be the seatpost.

COVERAGE

The greater the wheel circumference covered, the more protection offered. A long rear mudguard protects riding companions. A long front mudguard protects the feet better.

STAY-RELEASE SAFETY CLIPS

Unless the stays can snap free, flexible plastic mudguards can fold up behind the fork when jammed by an object. See cyclinguk.org/article/technical-guide/mudguard-safety

YOU STILL see cyclists without mudguards on winter club rides (hopefully at the back!), but mudguards make a big difference to riding comfort in bad weather. There's more: they go a long way to keeping the grit, organic matter, and pollutants suspended in standing water off the rider's clothes, drinking bottles, and much of the bike itself. This reduces wear and tear, and even the risk of illness.

Mudguards add weight and wind resistance, some rattle a bit, and some

cyclists don't like how they look. Overcome these objections and there's a cornucopia of models to choose from. Some are too short to offer more than the bare minimum of coverage. Those on test here are full-length ones that cover a large part of both front and rear wheels.

Choosing between them may come down to ease of fitting, looks, and even the suitability of the cycle in question for mudguard attachment. But any one of these four is a worthwhile addition to an all-weather bike. **G**

Your thoughts?

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1 AXIOM ROADRUNNER LX REFLEX 700x35

£31 PALIGAP.CC

Aimed squarely at the traditional audax/touring/winter training bike market, the Axiom features tough plastic 'Techniflex' guard strips, soft plastic mudflaps front and rear, and attractive, well-made, easily-installed fixings. Particularly helpful is the use of Nyloc nuts on the stays, which unlike those on the broadly similar SKS design are individual rather than bent to form a pair. Folded on delivery, they can each be simply unfolded, placed in position and the nut tightened without having to assemble separate stay eyebolts and their minuscule nuts. Nor do the stays, which have plastic sleeves on the tips, need to be cut to length. The guard strip cross-section includes a small lip on the inside that helps to trap water and prevent overspill. The strip has reflective panels incorporated but no rear reflector is fitted, nor are front stay-release clips provided. The overall impression is of a well-made product with a couple of omissions.

2 CRUD ROADRACER 3

£39.99 CRUDPRODUCTS.COM

This latest iteration of the Crud Roadracer addresses issues with the Mk2 stays and provides more tyre clearance, accommodating up to 700x38mm rubber according to the maker. The new stays are an integral part of the main moulding and are shaped to fit most seat stays and fork blades. The tail end hangs down a long way and is flared to offer generous protection for feet or following riders. The rear wheel nose section is designed to shield the front derailleur and drops below the chainstay bridge. As with the previous version, the Mk3 is primarily aimed at bikes lacking threaded bosses for conventional mudguard attachment. Instead, the moulded stays are fixed using a Velcro-like product called Duolock, which looks and feels much more rigid. Self-adhesive strips stuck to the frame by the user allow precise positioning, although it can take a few fittings and removals to get it just right. The only issue likely to arise during fitting is tyre clearance. It needs to be 4mm or more and some 'performance' bikes may not have enough.



VERDICT:
No safety clips. Otherwise well-made and easy to fit

VERDICT:
Lightweight, quick and easy to fit. The best option for 'race bikes'

VERDICT: The benchmark: well-made and long-lasting

VERDICT: Sturdy, handsome, and effective, but tricky to fit

3 SKS CHROMO-PLASTICS 700x35

£39.99 ZYROFISHER.CO.UK

SKS mudguards have been around for so long, it's easy to forget just how competent they are. The successor to the revolutionary ESGE guards, they are tough, durable, easy to install, and good-looking in a staid kind of way. They have 'SecuClip' stay release clips and use mainly stainless steel hardware. The old fatigue-prone pressed stainless steel rear brake bridge bracket has been replaced by a plastic version, and the invariably short-lived old mudflap by one that looks likely to last a lot longer. Is there anything to fault? One could carp: the strip's shape is not as effective as it might be at trapping water; and the little stay-fixing screws are fiddly to fit. But they set the standard for full-length road mudguards and look likely to do so for some time yet.

4 GILLES BERTHOUD FENDERS 700x40

£49.50 GILLESBERTHOUD.FR

Favoured by fans of classic randonneur aesthetics, these mudguards use stainless steel for the guard strips, supported by a single set of aluminium stays. These are attached to the frame using secure plastic clips, and to the mudguard strip via tiny stainless steel, button-head screws and Nyloc nuts. The fitting kit is miserly and assumes competence and dexterity on the part of the installer. The wonderful fork crown fixture, comprising rubber and steel washers and an eyebolt, is only designed to work with a 1in steerer and needs a bolt through the crown. There are lots of sizes available, for 26in, 650B and 700C wheels. The guard strip has rolled edges, which stiffen it and are amazingly effective; they were the best on test at keeping water off me. Thanks to the rigidity of the strip, they appear not to need front stay release clips. They're surprisingly light, look handsome, and can be polished...



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