

Kit reviews

GEAR

COMPONENTS, KIT AND MEDIA SELECTED AND REVIEWED BY SPECIALIST JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

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Henty WINGMAN BACKPACK **£155** henty.cc



- PROS & CONS**
- + Spacious and well thought out
 - + Doesn't crease your suit
 - An expensive solution

TRANSPORTING MY suit and shirts to work used to be one of those logistical nightmares that's rightly called a first-world problem. A trouser leg caught in the chain, a smear of oil on the inner right leg, a shirt creased from being carried in a rucksack or pannier – like many commuting cyclists, I've encountered all of these.

Tactics ranged from using an old Navy trick of my dad's, which involved rolling the trousers and turning the jacket inside out before folding it, to just dangling it in the tiny shower cubicle at work and hoping the resulting steam would see the creases disappear... In the end, the best solution was to take my suit in on a day when I didn't cycle and leave it at work.

Australian company Henty have put some thought into solving this issue. Other bags on the market require your suit or dress to be folded, but with the Wingman Backpack, it's all about rolling, which should prevent creasing.

I carried my old suit to Cycling UK's office for a week, and at journey's end I'm pleased to say my suit was creased only where it was

meant to be. Other nice touches include a handy loop to hang the unrolled bag from, plus a hanger that can be unclipped, making the transition from 'bag' to 'wardrobe' pretty painless.

In addition to the suit bag, there's an 18-litre kit/gym bag, in which you can put your shoes etc. You can also use it as a satchel when you reach your destination. It's closed like a roll-top dry-bag and feels waterproof. It didn't rain during my trial, but Henty says it's 'weatherproof'.

If you need to carry a laptop, it should fit down the back. I tried a work one with a screen of 14", and it slipped in once I'd loosened the straps. It actually created a nice flat back, but there's the potential for it digging into your spine if you're not careful. The bag has a nifty little loop for a bike light on the back, but its position meant it pointed at the kerb. I'd prefer to see a loop on the road-side of the bag instead.

On the bike, the backpack fits snugly with waist, chest and shoulder straps. It doesn't sway, and I didn't feel it got in the way of checking behind me. Curiously, when it was empty it dug into my neck and would be awkward with a helmet. When loaded, this problem disappeared.

It comes in two sizes, compact and standard. Compact is smaller by 10cm in width to the standard size (which I reviewed), and is designed specifically for carrying dresses. Either backpack will work as aircraft carry-on luggage too. Overall, the Wingman Backpack is a practical, if somewhat expensive, solution for carrying smart clothes whether on or off the bike.

Sam Jones

OTHER OPTIONS



1 SUITSAK
\$100-£125
 A bulky option from the US but at 40L carries everything an office worker should need. Might make over-the-shoulder checks difficult. suitsak.com



2 SHIRT SHUTTLE
MK3 £30
 Fits into pannier or bag and keeps shirts crisp and away from your lunch. Only shirts though, so you're still stuck with the suit problem. patrona.com/product/shirt-shuttle/

- PROS**
- + Stabilises bikepacking luggage
 - + Inexpensive



Alpkit
LOVE MUD
CONFUCIUS
BAR £35
 alpkit.com

THIS ALUMINIUM handlebar is designed primarily for bikepacking. It's different from the Jones Loop H-Bar that may have inspired it as it doesn't have the same pronounced back-sweep. The ends are angled back just 9°, so it's essentially a conventional flat bar with a big loop welded on the front. I like that, as back-swept bars have always felt odd to me off-road. I prefer being able to switch from a simple transverse grip onto Cane Creek Ergo Control bar ends and back as the situation demands.

The downside to Confucius's design is that you don't get the range of hand positions offered by the Jones bar. While you might grip it in a number of different ways, there are really just two or three useful ones: at the ends, where the grips go; hands almost together on the front of the loop, time trial style; and perhaps on the sides of the front loop. (I added bar ends for another position.) On everyday rides, holding the front loop was beneficial less often than I expected. I tended to use it only to tuck in on tarmac descents. But if you were riding all day into a Patagonian headwind, it should help.

The other benefits of the Confucius bar are more clear cut. Firstly, you've got more

handlebar space for lights, GPS, and any other gadgets. Secondly, the forward loop keeps a bikepacking-style handlebar bag much more stable. Alpkit sent me an Airlök Dual 13L dry-bag, and it strapped on firmly with no need for a separate handlebar harness, merely a spare toe-strap that I pinched from the D-rings of my Carradice saddlebag. Riding at over 20mph on rooty singletrack, the stuffed dry-bag scarcely moved – and not enough to upset the bike's handling. Any other front bikepacking bag should fit just as well, although a conventional bar bag won't. You'd get a weird tiller effect on the steering if you fitted one to the front loop, and the loop would get in the way of a bar bag on the main bar.

The Confucius bar is 484g uncut, the loop adding 200g or so over a comparably wide flat aluminium bar with a 31.8mm clamp section. And at 760mm, it is wide. I lopped 3cm off each end, partly because I ride in the woods a lot and clip trees often enough as it is, and partly because I wanted to use bar ends. Unless you cut your bike's grips down as well, 700mm is about as narrow as this handlebar will go.

Dan Joyce



- CONS**
- Limited extra hand positions



Above: The main benefit of the loop section is to provide a more stable framework for attaching bikepacking luggage, such as this 13-litre dry-bag

OTHER OPTIONS



1 JONES LOOP 710 H-BAR £149

The original loop bar offers lots of hand positions, just not the two I want most. It's expensive for an aluminium bar but well liked by owners. charliethebikemonger.com



2 SURLY MOLOKO BAR £89.99

Like the Jones, this odd-looking bar combines bikepacking bag stability with multiple hand positions. It's 735mm wide and, being chrome-moly, is heavy: 709g. ison-distribution.com

Exposure Lights REVO DYNAMO FRONT LIGHT **£236.20**

exposurelights.com

PROS
+ Light weight & low drag
+ Excellent light output



CONS
- No on-off switch

THERE'S A LOT to like about Exposure Lights' Revo Dynamo headlight: smartly turned out, lightweight, easily attached to the bike, and very powerful, it is also, as the name says, powered by dynamo. That means, of course, convenient and reliable lighting independent of battery life.

Crisply machined from aluminium billet and finished to Exposure Lights' usual immaculate standard, the Revo is nuggety, with external dimensions suggestive of a small battery light. It's reasonably light at 110g, including the handlebar mounting bracket. This neat component's hinged aluminium cradle clamps the handlebar centre bulge via a small M5 screw, and is supplied with adaptor sleeves to convert either from 35mm to 31.8mm or 31.8mm to 26mm depending on the bracket provided. The light clips to the bracket using a wedge-shaped cleat secured by a spring-loaded conical pin; both fitting and removal are quick and easy, and the system is both hard to get wrong and completely reliable if done correctly.



Above: No on-off switch means daytime running lights – unless you unplug the input cable

The power cable plugs into the 6V input port and must be fitted with a connector appropriate to the hub dynamo in use. A second 'output' port can be used to power an Exposure RedEye rear light for completely battery-free illumination. With the power cable connected to a Shimano dynamo hub, the wheel spins surprisingly freely, with less increase in drag than might be expected when the light is plugged in.

There is no on-off switch, which is a bit of an omission since the only way to turn the light off is to pull the plug. In daylight, this means either riding with the light burning (which some may prefer to do) or with a dangling cable and plug. Perhaps more importantly, it makes the Revo less than ideal for use in an on-bike charging system as detailed last issue, since sharing the dynamo's output between a light and device to be charged significantly reduces the available charge rate.

Light output is 'up to 800 lumens', which is quite a lot. It's up there with Exposure's Strada 800 battery lamp, and it lights up the road ahead very effectively – easily enough for 30mph descending on unlit roads. You might even use it off-road. Light output increases steadily once rolling, initially from just two and then from all four Cree XPG LEDs until stabilising at its maximum at 15mph. When the power supply is cut, two of the LEDs continue to shine, brightly at first and then slowly declining for about an hour, giving a 'standlight' function and allowing the Revo to be used as a torch. If not quite the traditional dynamo light, it's a very neat and effective piece of kit, but one that could do with an on-off switch.

Richard Hallett

OTHER OPTIONS



1 SCHMIDT EDELUX II £124.99

Good looking, exceptional illumination, on-off switch, and standlight. Fork crown mount supplied. sjscycles.co.uk



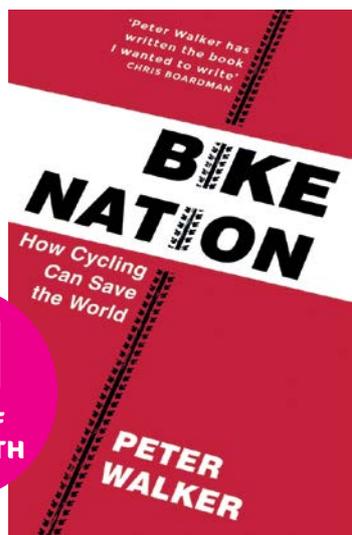
2 B&M LUMOTEC CYO IQ SENSO PLUS £68

Impressively powerful, with standlight, switch, and daylight sensor. amba-marketing.com

Book reviews

BOOKS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS



Peter Walker
BIKE NATION £12.99
penguin.co.uk

PETER WALKER is the Guardian journalist who set up its Bike Blog back in 2009. Bike Nation does read like an extended version of one of his blogs, but it has the bonus that it comes without comments added by anti-cycling trolls.

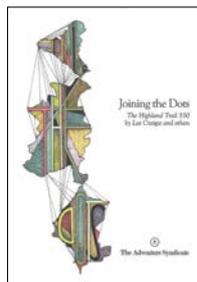
Bike Nation is a balance of facts, statistics, research and interviews with experts, illuminated by Peter's own cycling experiences. Although it's from the perspective of cycling in the UK, it looks at how Denmark and Holland achieved higher levels of cycling and, unlike many other books about cycling, weaves in stories from countries around the world.

Bike Nation examines the barriers to cycling in the UK without patronising the reader. It tackles controversial subjects like cycle helmets and why cyclists are hated. Both sides of the arguments are clearly examined and Peter's own personal biases are openly discussed. What Bike Nation achieves in around 200 pages is to succinctly pull together the evidence to show that cycling is a magic pill to improve health, air pollution, society and road safety.

The majority of the book unpicks the societal reasons for doing more to encourage cycling. Peter also paints a passionate and inspirational argument for every individual. 'At the risk of sounding borderline messianic,' he writes, 'cycling makes your life better.'

This is not just a book for cycle campaigners. It will help everyone who cycles to understand how they are part of something that has the potential to change our nation for the better.

Victoria Hazael



Lee Craigie & others
JOINING THE DOTS, THE HIGHLAND TRAIL 550 £15
theadventuresyndicate.com/shop

LEE CRAIGIE weaves a spell-binding account of her four tough days riding the Highland Trail 550, a self-supported mountain bike journey against the clock in the Scottish Highlands. Lee barely sleeps, then battles with her emotions, sore feet, and a failing Garmin. It's not just her story: the journal brings in the views of other riders and her friends and family who are watching the dots on a screen, hoping that she will get through this. Lee is the cofounder of The Adventure Syndicate, a Cycling UK affiliated group. **Victoria Hazael**



Sustrans
LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS ON THE NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK £14.95
shop.sustrans.org.uk

THIS NEW guide to the End to End uses Sustrans National Cycle Network routes exclusively. It's packed with information, with clear maps, ideas on where to eat and stay etc, but is small enough to take with you. The route it describes keeps away from busy roads and much of it is traffic-free. It's well-written, easy to follow, and focuses on enjoying the ride rather than treating it as a challenge to be done in the shortest possible time. I really liked it.

Roland Seber



Offcomers
CYCLING THE HEBRIDEAN WAY £16.99
theoffcomers.co.uk

OFFICIALLY OPENED last year as NCN Route 780, the 180-mile Hebridean Way runs along the Western Isles from Vatersay in the south to Lewis in the north. Offcomers' guide does all the usual things well, with clear route maps and information about accommodation and cake stops. The extra detail on the history, culture, and landscape of the places you visit makes it more than a route guide: it's a window into a unique corner of the UK. **Duncan Dollimore**



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