

Group test

CYCLING JEANS



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Cycle editor

For urban cycling, there are better compromises than uncomfortable denim or geeky bike gear. **Dan Joyce** tests jeans designed for cyclists

YOU CAN cycle in normal jeans, of course, but there are a few reasons you might not want to. Comfort tops the list: a thick seam in the crotch combined with a narrow bicycle saddle can make you sore. Then there's durability: denim wears through at the sit bones after a while. Finally, there's the fit: even those of us who aren't track sprinters tend to develop bulkier quads and glutes than non-cyclists of our weight and waist size, making some ordinary jeans restrictively tight.

Why cycle in jeans at all? Why not? When your bike is your transport, you want to be able to hop on and off it in whatever you're wearing. So if you're going to own any jeans, it's arguably worth paying extra for a pair that's better suited to cycling.

Note that there is no gender equality when it comes to cycling jeans: women have fewer to choose from. 

SEAT

The signature design feature of cycling jeans is an extra diamond-shaped panel of material in the crotch: a gusset that prevents you sitting on a thick seam.

MATERIAL

Cycling jeans aren't 100% cotton. A small amount of elastane or other synthetic fibre enables the fabric to stretch to provide a closer fit that doesn't compromise pedalling. Some jeans also employ Cordura for abrasion resistance.

EXTRAS

Most cycling jeans have reflective details that are revealed if you roll them part way up your calf, hipster-style. Some have additional details such as ankle tabs or reinforcing panels.

WAIST

Whether or not there's any elastication, all jeans have belt loops so you can fine-tune the fit that way. To accommodate a leaning-forward posture, the cut is normally lower at the front, so your belt buckle won't dig into your belly, and higher at the back. Some have a zipped fly, others buttons.

POCKETS

You won't be wearing a bike jersey, so anything you need to pocket – keys, coins, wallet, phone, etc. – will likely go in the jeans. Four pockets is a minimum, all deep enough that they won't spill their contents when you're pedalling.

LEG

Even regular-fit cycling jeans tend to be cut a little closer in the lower leg to prevent them flapping around, with slim-fit and skinny-fit jeans cut closer still. Some jeans have darts at the knee for easier bending, but most depend on the fabric's stretchiness.



Your thoughts?

WRITE TO US: Cycle Letters, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

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1 OSLOH TRAFFIC JEAN
£152.33, OSLOH.COM

Osloh jeans are shipped from the USA, so the price (and \$25 shipping) depends on the exchange rate, which Sterling's Brexit-driven dive against the dollar hasn't helped. They're still very nice jeans, with features I've not seen elsewhere. Chief among them is the quilted 'chamois' in the seat, which is thin enough to be unobtrusive off the bike but thick enough to make a difference to comfort – and probably durability – on it. The waist has press-stud adjusters. I needed them; American 'slim-fit' feels like a regular fit to me, and these jeans are lightweight and airy. The right leg is reinforced near the drivetrain to prevent tears, and there are pockets for *everything*. The only feature I missed was the Lane Jean's ankle tabs; the Traffic's loose cuffs demand cycle clips. Waist: 28-38in, leg 30-34in. Weight (32x32): 548g. Indigo, black, navy, or khaki. The Women's Porteur Jean (26-32 waist, 30 or 32 leg) is similar and the same price.

2 SWRVE CORDURA SLIM FIT
£80 SWRVE.CO.UK

As the name says, these Swrve jeans are made from a stretchy Cordura denim. Instead of 98% cotton, 2% elastane like the other three pairs in this test, they're 55% cotton, 30% polyester, and 15% T420 nylon. The fabric feels similar but is lighter weight and, Swrve say, more abrasion resistant – a claim supported by another pair of Swrve Cordura jeans I've got that are three years old. They're comfortable on the bike, thanks to a seamless gusset, just enough stretch, and a bike-friendly cut that's lower in the front and higher in the back. The legs are narrow enough that you might get away without cycle clips. Reflective piping is visible from behind if you roll up either leg. The pockets are deep and the rear ones are big enough for a mini D-lock. The fly has a YKK zip. Waist: 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, or 36in. Leg: 32 or 34in. Weight (32x32): 528g. Indigo or black.

3 GIRO TRANSFER DENIM JEANS
£79.99, ZYROFISHER.CO.UK

Apart from the fact that these are cut higher at the back than the front, they reminded me of conventional jeans. For one thing, there's a thick seam running front to back; the crotch has a reinforcing gusset rather than separate, seamless panel. For another thing, they felt tight over my thighs and pelvis. I think that's a combination of a less cyclist-friendly cut and a heavier, stiffer fabric. They were okay on the bike but felt restrictive off it. There's the usual complement of five pockets, and the legs have reflective strips if you turn them up. The main plus point of these button-fly jeans is that they seem durable. If they fit you better than they did me, they'll do okay. I'd be tempted by cheaper slim-fit stretch jeans from e.g. M&S instead. Sizes: S-XXL. Weight (M, 32x32): 712g. Indigo.



VERDICT:
 The most well thought-out cycling jeans I've worn. Excellent though they are, the price would make me pause.

VERDICT:
 Tough, lightweight, and well cut for wearing on or off the bike. The jeans I'd buy with my own money.

VERDICT:
 Too much like normal jeans, with a more restrictive fit and a thick seam in the crotch.

VERDICT:
 Nice styling and a snug but comfortably stretchy fit – if they're still available...

4 VULPINE MEN'S URBAN CYCLING JEANS
£120 VULPINE.CC

Vulpine suddenly went into administration just before this issue went to press. The web shop still *seemed* to be working, however, and the Urban Cycling Jeans were advertised in various sizes at a reduced price of £84. Perhaps the administrators, or a takeover company, will continue to sell off stock? Maybe there will be a fire sale? Or maybe Vulpine and their jeans will be gone for good by the time you read this... It would be nice if these jeans do remain available, as they're a decent buy at £84 – albeit overpriced at £120. The fabric is lighter weight than the Giro Transfers and the fit is good: close cut but offering unimpeded pedalling, thanks to

darts at the knee and a good amount of stretch. There's a seamless gusset, a button fly, and a bit of reflectivity in the turn-ups. The only downside to these more figure-hugging jeans is that they're lower at the back, potentially exposing skin when riding. Sizes: XS-XXL, in regular and long, plus women's sizes S-XL. Weight (M, R): 644g. Indigo or black.



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