

Kit reviews

# GEAR

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

## Restrap RAN DO BAG SMALL

£129.99 [restrap.co.uk](http://restrap.co.uk)

**E**QUALLY AT HOME mounted in front of the handlebar or on a rear rack, Restrap's Rando Bag Small adds a useful 11 litres of carrying capacity, split between a main compartment and water-resistant zippered front pouch. Mesh external side pockets offer some extra space, and internal elasticated straps at each side can be used to keep awkward items from rattling around. The top flap, which is rearward-opening when the bag is mounted ahead of the handlebars, has a zippered map pocket. An off-bike carrying strap and internal stiffeners complete the comprehensive specification.

The bag is just the right width to fit snugly between the brake levers of a regular drop handlebar while allowing space for fingers. That said, it's on the large size for a handlebar bag and definitely needs some sort of fork-mounted support rack if so positioned. Unlike many such bags, the



Rando Bag Small (the Large version is the same width but 50mm higher and 20mm deeper) is not supplied with a handlebar mounting bracket and instead uses a stiff plastic plate, designed to be fixed to a rack using the zip-ties supplied. This has its advantages: the plate can be fixed to a front or rear rack, and the support provided by the rack means the bag can carry a heavier load than is possible with a handlebar bracket. Indeed, given the bag's capacity, care should be taken not to carry enough weight to impair handling if it is placed up front.

The bag clips quickly, neatly, and securely to the plate via a pair of magnetic fastenings and a sort of twisting action. There's an adjustable strap at the back that can be passed around the head tube for greater security. The plate is provided with numerous holes for the zip-ties and, with a little ingenuity, can be fixed to almost any

**Review requests**

Is there a product that you would like us to review?

**WRITE TO:** Cycle,  
PO Box 313, Scarborough,  
YO12 6WZ **EMAIL:**  
[cycle@jamespembroke-media.co.uk](mailto:cycle@jamespembroke-media.co.uk)

**PROS & CONS**

- + Effective mounting system
- + Capacity & build quality
- Wide Velcro-flap closure



rack. It is wide, though, and on my test bike looked obtrusive with the bag removed. This would not be the case were the plate mounted longitudinally on a rear rack.

The fabric used for the bag is described as 'military grade' and 'durable'. It is also 'waterproof', although keeping out heavy rain is likely to be as much down to the design of the bag's top flap, which features 'bellows' sides that fold inwards to help keep out rainwater.

Weighing just under 800g, the bag is big enough for a weekend tour or long-distance randonnee, wherever it's placed on the bike.

**Richard Hallett**

**OTHER OPTIONS**



**1 ORTLIEB ULTIMATE6 CLASSIC £72**

Waterproof construction, choice of 7-litre or 8.5-litre capacity, various colour schemes, and a lockable mounting system. Weight limit is 5kg. [ortlieb.com](http://ortlieb.com)



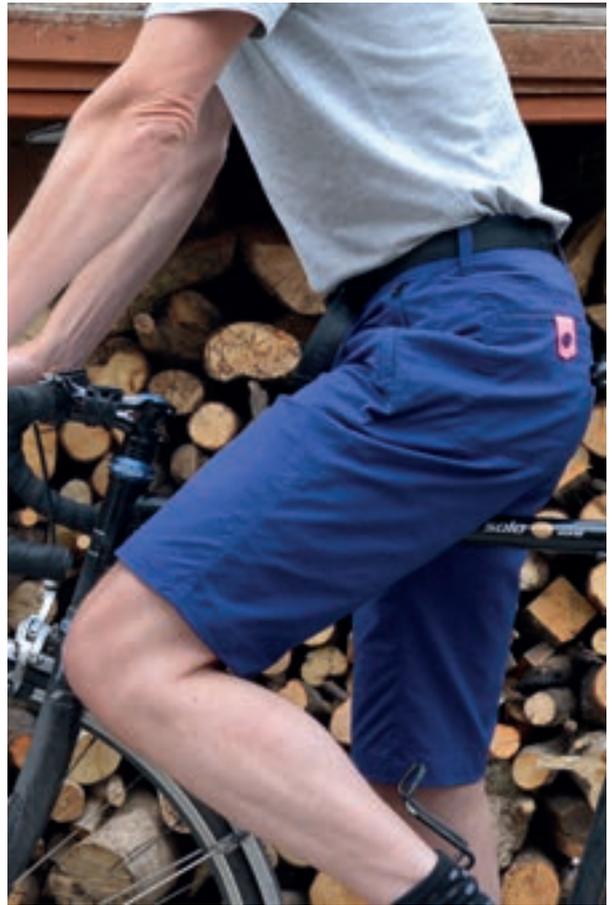
**2 OSTRICH HANDLEBAR BAG £34**

12-litre cotton duck front bag made in Japan and designed to sit on a support rack. Needs decaleur bracket (Google it) or other means of attachment to the rack. [on-one.co.uk](http://on-one.co.uk)



**PROS & CONS**

- + Well cut for cycling
- Lightweight, quick drying, comfy
- Expensive



# Rapha RANDONNEE SHORTS

£90 [rapha.cc](http://rapha.cc)

**CLOSE-CUT SHORTS** for cycling seem to be a rarity these days. It's either skin-tight Lycra shorts, which are fine for racing or fitness riding, or mountain biking baggies, which are often flappy and garish. I've used Endura Singletrack shorts as general purpose bike shorts before and they're decent, but I've finally found something better for summer city riding and touring: Rapha's Randonnee shorts.

Rapha describe them as 'city cycling shorts for hot and humid conditions'. They filled that role well, in stifling 26° heat in London and during fresher days in Yorkshire. I also used them for mountain biking (they were fine) and on my road bike (ditto), for hours at a time. I didn't wear padded Lycra shorts beneath, just normal underwear – polyamide/elastane sports underwear rather than cotton when I was going more than a few miles. There's

no seat pad but I was always comfortable, and the airier design compared with skin-tight shorts meant that I sweated less in the first place and didn't stay sweaty when I did.

The Randonnee shorts are cut fairly close to the leg so don't flap about, and higher at the rear so they don't expose your lower back when cycling. They reach to just above the knee, which suited me. If you want them shorter you can roll up the hems, which exposes a stripe of Rapha's trademark pink.

They're made from a lightweight mix of 94% nylon, 6% spandex (i.e. Lycra), so there's some stretch in the fabric. They're not gusseted but the seams are flat and unobtrusive. The waist has a double button and a zipped fly but isn't elasticated. I'd have liked buttoned side adjusters to fine-tune the generous fit. Go for one size smaller than your jeans size. Even the 30in size was a bit loose

on me, so I used a lightweight webbing walking belt from Karrimor.

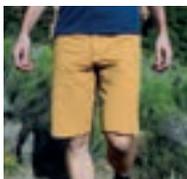
There are two front pockets, both with zips, and two rear pockets: one with a ring-pull zip that's easy to use on the move, one with a fiddly button that isn't. With all pockets secure, you don't have to worry about your keys or phone getting ejected as you ride.

Ninety pounds is a lot of money for cycling shorts. However, these are as good off the bike as on – better, in fact, than any of my 'normal', non-cycling shorts. They don't weigh much (238g, size 30in) and they roll up compactly so are easy to pack for touring or bikepacking. I'm tempted to get a second pair in a different colour.

They're machine washable at 30° and don't need ironing. Sizes: mens 28-36in, women's XXS-XXL. Various non-garish colours available.

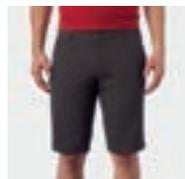
**Dan Joyce**

## OTHER OPTIONS



**1 SWRVE LIGHTWEIGHT WWR REGULAR SHORT £65**

Lightweight (under 200g) shorts made from a mix of nylon, Coolplus (which is mostly polyester), and spandex. Double-ply seat and a gusseted crotch. [swrve.co.uk](http://swrve.co.uk)



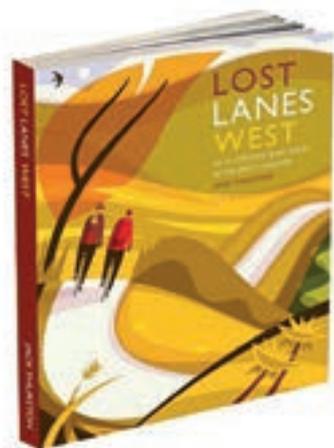
**2 GIRO VENTURE SHORT II £69.99**

Giro call these oversHORTS, but they should be fine without padded Lycra underneath. Again, it's a stretch fabric (nylon, polyester, spandex) with a tailored fit. [zyroffisher.co.uk](http://zyroffisher.co.uk)

## Book reviews

## BOOKS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS



Jack Thurston

## LOST LANES WEST

£16.99

wildthingspublishing.com

EVER SINCE 2013, when I started riding the routes in Jack's first Lost Lanes book about Southern England, I've been waiting for him to write about the south west, where I grew up. That wait has been worthwhile: we're presented with 36 glorious rides for anyone wishing to discover the delights of cycling in Wiltshire, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Cornwall.

What I enjoy most about the Lost Lanes series is that each ride is a combination of travelogue, route description, and background history to the locations you're riding through. As with the rest of the series, there's no need to lug the book around, as maps, printable route guides, and GPX files all available via the Lost Lanes website.

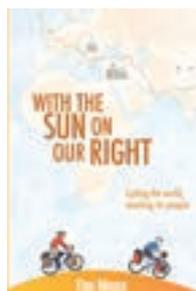
Rides range from 25 to 65 miles, and are designed to be as accessible by train as possible. With each ride, there are also suggestions for where to eat, where to stay, and also the location of the local bike shop in case things go wrong.

It's great to hear people's experiences of riding routes you're familiar with, and even better to go and ride them again. With Lost Lanes West, I've got an excuse to do so.

Cycling UK members can purchase the book with a 20% discount and free P&P using the coupon 'CyclingUK' at the online checkout on the publisher's website:

**wildthingspublishing.com**. You can read an extract from the book here: [cyclinguk.org/lostlaneswest](http://cyclinguk.org/lostlaneswest).

Sam Jones



Tim Moss

## WITH THE SUN ON OUR RIGHT

£12

[thenextchallenge.org/books/sun/](http://thenextchallenge.org/books/sun/)

I'VE READ A LOT of tales of travelling around the world on a bike. Most talk about the journey, the scenery, and the bikes, with a few humorous anecdotes thrown in. This book is different. It's about the people Tim and Laura Moss met on their 13,000 mile journey. The couple encountered an eclectic mix of characters, all with insights about their countries. The bravest thing about this book is not the adventure but the honesty with which Tim talks about how his depression almost stopped him from leaving. You can read an extract on the Cycling UK website: [bit.ly/cycle-sunonright](http://bit.ly/cycle-sunonright).

Victoria Hazael



Nick Legan

## GRAVEL CYCLING

£21.95

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

GRAVEL CYCLING IS a comprehensive guide to the world of gravel riding/racing, adventure cycling, and bikepacking. The slightly dull title doesn't do justice to the sheer amount of information inside. The race section includes guides to events, mainly in North America but also others all over the world, including the Dirty Reiver in Northumberland. There is a detailed section on bikepacking and adventure riding, with a guide to what bike and equipment to buy, and help with training, nutrition, and navigation. It's a bit textbook-like but packed with useful facts about this fast-growing area of cycling. Roland Seber



Chris Sidwells

## THE CALL OF THE ROAD

£20 [harpercollins.co.uk](http://harpercollins.co.uk)

THE GREATEST EXAMPLE of road racing, the Tour de France, will have just finished when you read this review. We will have had a valiant winner, a plucky loser, a 'lanterne rouge' (last man in the race), strutting sprinters, and previously unknown also-rans winning daring breakaways – not to mention 200 million TV viewers, 15 million roadside aficionados, and tonnes of promotional landfill thrown to fans. Road racing is drama, skulduggery, pathos and business as well as sport. Sidwells attempts to capture the essence of all road racing (not just the TdF) in this engaging overview.

Matt Mallinder



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For more reviews of bikes, kit and components, as well as how-to guides, visit [cyclinguk.org/cycling-advice](http://cyclinguk.org/cycling-advice)