

# Reviews

# Gear up

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

## Put to the test

Is there a product that you think needs reviewing?

Write to: *Cycle*, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

@cycle@jamespembroke  
media.co.uk



### Pros & cons

- + Good-looking
- + Ultimate comfort
- + Many pockets



## CamelBak

# Women's Solstice LR10

£114.99 [camelbak.com](http://camelbak.com)

I stopped using bags for carrying water on my back when mountain biking as the reservoirs invariably began leaking for no apparent reason, and they were always a faff to shove into the bags. The mouthpieces were also fiddly to use on the move. So I switched to water bottles. Goodbye to a sodden back but also the ability to hydrate on a climb.

I had high hopes for this latest female-specific pack from CamelBak. The three-litre reservoir's lid closed easily and without leaking, so long as I did it

horizontally, and it was a doddle to insert into the pack. No more shoving and pushing, praying I wouldn't be drenched – hurrah!

Another potential source of a soaking is the mouthpiece, but this one is very user-friendly – easy to switch on and off, with a magnetic catch that means it's easy to attach to the shoulder strap and keep on-hand for a quick slurp.

The reservoir itself sits low down in the bag, so there's space above to carry something like an extra layer. In theory, the low position also makes it

more comfortable on your back. When it comes to the women-specific features, I liked the wide waist belt that doesn't cut into your middle, and the well-fitting shoulder straps.

There are a few pockets for storing tools, spares, bananas, money, phone and other paraphernalia necessary for a long ride, as well as places to store a full-face helmet and body armour if you need to take those with you. I also really liked the handy 'cargo pockets' on the waist strap, which are just about suitable for stashing a medium-sized phone in. No more stopping and taking your pack off to get the perfect selfie on the trail! However, only one of the pockets has a zip.

The pack comes in three colourways: teal/turquoise (pictured); dragon teal/lake blue; and charcoal/light purple. ●

**Julie Rand**

## Other options



### OSPREY RAVEN 14 £120

This women-specific bag has a ventilated back panel to keep you cool, and a 2.5l reservoir. The stretch hip-belt is comfortable. [ospreyeurope.com](http://ospreyeurope.com)



### EVOC STAGE 6L + 2L BLADDER £109.99

Recommended for faster, technical riding as it's lightweight and the shoulder straps move freely so don't constrain you. Includes 2l reservoir. [evocsports.com](http://evocsports.com)

## Verdict

*It's a nice-looking bag, and one that has converted me back to using a hydration pack instead of water bottles for mountain biking.*



## Cycle's test promise

At Cycle, we are proudly independent. There's no pressure to please advertisers as we're funded by your membership. Our product reviews aren't press releases; they're written by experienced cyclists after thorough testing.

## Brooks England Cambium C15 All- Weather

£95 [brooksengland.com](http://brooksengland.com)

**A**n immediate success following its launch some five years ago, the original Cambium saddle marked a radical departure by Brooks England, the manufacturer, which had previously been best known for saddles made using thick leather for the upper. Instead, the Cambium used vulcanised rubber, covered in a 'structural textile', or organic cotton fabric, which was incorporated during the top's manufacturing process to become an integral part of the moulding. With use, the fabric might wear away in places but it otherwise proved durable.

Some owners found, however, that persistently wet weather could weaken the cotton, which naturally absorbs water, shortening its service life. To

address this, the Smethwick firm now offers all-weather versions of the Cambium, including the mid-sized C15. They use synthetic nylon fabric for the cover.

### A new set up

The All-Weather Cambium's frame features black-finished steel rails, but fiberglass-reinforced plastic is now used for the back or 'candle' plate in place of the original's cast aluminium. It maintains Brooks England's tradition by incorporating slots designed to accept saddle bag loops, and it features the Brooks logo in a small panel. The upper is attached using short, broad-headed Torx screws, with heads reminiscent of the rivets used on the leather saddles.

Most synthetic saddles have a rigid plastic shell, and require cushioning from a layer of foam or gel to help soak up bumps

and vibration. However, the rubber upper of this saddle, even though it feels hard to the touch, is elastic, and the thin top gives under the weight of the rider to spread loads, minimising the concentration of pressure and soaking up road bumps and vibration in the same way as a broken-in leather saddle.

The Cambium All Weather is available in four widths – C13, C15, C17 and C19 – and all of them are also available in standard and 'carved' models, with a pressure-relieving hole. The C17's dimensions are said to be based on the classic leather Brooks B17, which will please audax riders and tourists. The C15's sleek shape looks good on a lightweight road bike although, at 450g, it may not find favour with riders concerned about weight. ●

*Richard Hallett*

### Pros & cons

- + Comfort from the off
- + Weather-resistant
- Relatively heavy



### Other options

#### SELLE SAN MARCO ROLLS MICROFIBRE £75

A classic, lightweight, rigid-shell saddle with a woven fabric covering and a touch of class.

[sellesanmarco.it/en](http://sellesanmarco.it/en)



#### FIZIK ARIONE CLASSIC £119

This is a contemporary performance saddle, flexible with comfort-enhancing features.

[fizik.com/uk\\_en](http://fizik.com/uk_en)



### Verdict

*Unlike leather, the Cambium does not need breaking in; it is amazingly comfortable straight away. This version is practically impervious to rain.*



**Pros & cons**

- + Warm and dry
- Too bulky to stow away easily
- Lack of reflectivity



**Hilltrek**

# Hebridean Cycling Gilet

£120 [hilltrek.co.uk](http://hilltrek.co.uk)

Colleagues and friends have long been espousing the benefits and versatility of a gilet, and while I can see the benefit of a lightweight body warmer that can be stuffed into a jersey pocket, I've yet to make the commitment. I was therefore curious to give Hilltrek's Hebridean Cycling Gilet a go – to see if it is something I was missing on my Hebridean exploits (see p54).

Made of Ventile, a wind- and showerproof, environmentally-friendly cotton fabric, it's billed as "easily packed away". Sadly, it's not – unless you habitually ride around with a Carradice-style saddlebag, or you're on tour and have ample luggage space. (Then

again, if I was on a tour I'd prefer to use the space that this would take up for a waterproof jacket instead.) Given its bulk, this is a garment you'll most likely wear for your ride's duration. That's an issue if you easily overheat, but could be a benefit if you suffer from the cold.

**Fit and function**

The gilet I tested was designed to fit a male with a 37in chest – specifically, Editor Dan Joyce. It was a bit too big for him so he passed it on to me; I usually wear 38in tops. On me it was roomy enough for a fairly thick woollen jumper to fit underneath. Using it on cold winter commutes to work, it was perfect for my six-mile

ride, providing that extra degree of warmth for my core.

Where it has come into its own has been off-road. Despite dashes through sloppy mud, I've yet to get wet, and at the end of the day, when the muck dried, I could easily dislodge it with a brush.

Given the black-coloured back of the gilet, I would have hoped for some reflective piping, but there is none. The chest pocket is ample, as is the rear zipped pocket. I'd prefer a typical jersey design of three pockets, however, as it can be awkward reaching back mid-ride. ●

**Sam Jones**

**Verdict**

*The Ventile fabric make this gilet warm and snug, plus it's easy to clean after wet, muddy rides. However, I'd prefer something more packable.*

**Other options**



**ENDURA PRO SL PRIMALOFT GILET**

£114.99

Lightweight, windproof, and layered with Primaloft insulation to keep you cosy on cold days.

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



**LUSSO NITELIFE GILET**

£89.99

A windproof gilet with a thermal front, the NiteLife's ace card is its phosphor-bright reflective panels front and rear. It packs down small too.

[lusso.bike](http://lusso.bike)

# Previews Casuals

BIKE RIDE OR COFFEE DATE? YOU CAN DO BOTH WITH THIS SELECTION OF GEAR

## Style counsel

Got a favourite outfit to ride in? We'd love to see it. Tag [@wearecyclinguk](#) on Instagram or email your cycling photos to: [@cycle@jamespembroke-media.co.uk](mailto:cycle@jamespembroke-media.co.uk)



### 1 Workcycles FR8 £1,225+

Pronounced 'freight', this sturdy steel stepthrough is a compact cargo bike that will ferry up to three kids to school. Guards (mud, chain, and coat) keep you all clean. [bikefix.co.uk](http://bikefix.co.uk)

### 2 Endura Hummvee Shacket £89.99

Bike jacket or flannel shirt? It's both! This reversible 'shacket' (sigh) is lightweight but cosy and has zipped pockets. Red or anthracite. [endurasport.com](http://endurasport.com)

### 3 PDW Bar-ista £14.99

Coffee to go? This bar-mounted, rubber-lined cup holder will firmly hold most tapered cups and flasks. Don't forget a lid! [ridepdw.com](http://ridepdw.com)

### 4 Happy Rainy Days Cycling Raincoat – Madonna £124.99

April showers? No problem. This breathable, cotton-lined waterproof raincoat has an extra piece of fabric in the 'skirt' to keep your legs dry when pedalling. [cyclechic.co.uk](http://cyclechic.co.uk)



### 5 Shimano SH-CT5 Shoes £87.99

Everyday trainers discreetly designed to work with SPD or easier-release Click'R pedals on the bike. Available in navy, black, or olive, sizes 38-48. [bike.shimano.com](http://bike.shimano.com)

### 6 Giro Tech Tee £29.99

You can cycle in any T-shirt, but the wicking properties of this technical top means you won't get too sweaty. Screen-printed designs make them pub-ready. [zyrofischer.co.uk](http://zyrofischer.co.uk)

### 7 Hill & Ellis Leola bag £98

Just launched, this canvas bag has adjustable pannier clips to fit on 6-16mm racks and a central locking bar. The removable shoulder strap makes for easy carrying about town. [hillandellis.com](http://hillandellis.com)



## Practical pedalling

For more information about commuting and transport cycling, visit [cyclinguk.org/commuting](http://cyclinguk.org/commuting)

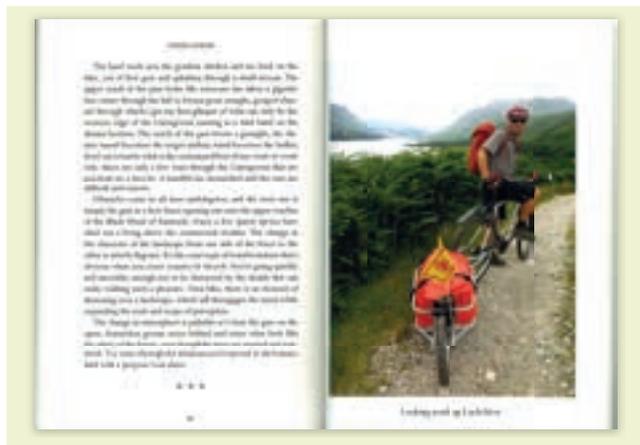
# Reviews

# Books

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS

## Print queue

Cycle doesn't feature all books received. Reviewers pick the ones they think you need to know about from the Editor's shortlist. Send review copies to: *Cycle*, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ



## Overlander



### Details

**By:** Alan Brown  
**Publisher:** Saraband  
**Price:** £12.99  
**ISBN:** 9781912235414

**I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT** about completing a trip like this, being a fan of bikepacking, the Highlands, and coast-to-coast journeys. Alan Brown's book, however, points out the harsh realities of such an expedition across Scotland. He rides on his homemade hybrid, towing a trailer, from Loch Etive in the west to the Moray Firth at Findhorn in the east, using remote tracks and drove roads, some barely rideable. Midges plague him, supplies are hard to find, the trailer is cumbersome, and he forgets to pack any oil for his well-used chain!

Despite these hardships, the book is also filled with enticing descriptions

of extraordinary terrain, basic refuges, wonderful wildlife, colourful characters, and historical references. It is an enjoyable account of an epic cycle journey across some of the wildest scenery left in Europe, let alone the British Isles. Alan's wry portraits of the Highland communities he passes through made me smile, as did his self-deprecating sketches of the tricky situations he found himself in.

Recommended for those drawn by the call of the wild, whether from their armchairs or bicycle saddles. But perhaps not a trip to make with a trailer if you're doing it yourself!

**Julie Rand**



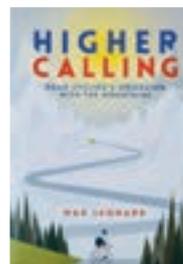
### Details

**By:** Nicolas Mitchell  
**Publisher:** The Crowood Press  
**Price:** £9.99  
**ISBN:** 9781785004711

## Cycling Scotland's North Coast

**THIS IS A COMPREHENSIVE** guide to Scotland's newest road route, the North Coast 500, broken down into seven stages. Each opens with a précis of that day's ride, followed with blow-by-blow directions. The pictures feel dated, even if the bikes and route in them are new. The book will fit in a jersey pocket, and provides basic maps and accommodation suggestions for the non-camper. The e-book version has links to GPX files for the route, which are sadly missing from this print version.

**Sam Jones**



### Details

**By:** Max Leonard  
**Publisher:** Yellow Jersey  
**Price:** £9.99  
**ISBN:** 9780224100366

## Higher Calling

**MAX LEONARD'S ABSORBING** book explores the fascination of road cycling with mountain passes, ranging from the earliest days of the Tour de France to the Giro d'Italia in 2016. Epic tales of endurance are interspersed with vignettes about how and why certain mountains have attained their legendary status. Exemplary mountain-beating female cyclists are all but ignored, unfortunately. For their stories, you'll have to turn to 'Queens of Pain' by Isabel Best.

**Julie Rand**



### Details

**By:** Ned Boulting & Cillian Kelly  
**Publisher:** theroadbook.co.uk  
**Price:** £50  
**ISBN:** 9781916484900

## The Road Book 2018

**IMAGINE A WISDEN** for fans of bicycle road racing. The Road Book is something to dip in and out of as the season unfolds, reminding yourself of last year's drama. With thoughts of beer and bergs, I started with the cruellest month, April, and the Tour of Flanders. Having reminded myself of Terpstra's epic win, I moved onto the cobbles, Roubaix, and Sagan's dominance. Within minutes I was once more a budding teenage racer and the next king of the cobbles. This book lets you dream again!

**Duncan Dollimore**



### Correction

Designing for Cycle Traffic by John Parkin, reviewed last issue, is £65 not £60. Read more at:

[cyclenguk.org/johnparkin](http://cyclenguk.org/johnparkin)