



Grouptest

Casual shorts

Don't fancy the lycra look? **Liz Colebrook** tests four pairs of baggy cycling shorts for women



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Who'd have thought that cycling shorts would make a fashion comeback? With neon styles splashed across the high street for the first time since the 1980s, we won't be alone in our lycra this summer. Still, it's not for everyone or every situation, even when the shorts are a discreet black. Viable alternatives do exist.

There's more to casual 'baggy' cycling shorts than a looser fit. These shorts, which are designed for a range of cycling disciplines, have cargo pockets, vents, more protection, durability, detachable shorts liners, and wicking stretch fabrics. Crucially, this looser, casual style gives us more modesty for situations when we don't want to reveal every curve – going from bike to pub, for example.

The key issue with shorts not designed for cycling in is the bulk where four seams meet at the crotch. This pushes uncomfortably into sensitive soft tissue when riding – cue the 'gusset', a diamond-shaped insert at the crotch area, which both addresses this problem and increases the range of movement.

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Comfort

Look for breathable stretch fabric and a diamond gusset. If you don't usually wear padded shorts, you'll probably have a cushioned gel saddle so are unlikely to need a shorts liner. If you're used to traditional lycra shorts and a 'firmer' saddle, consider wearing a padded shorts liner. If so, make sure the shorts have room for this and don't feel too tight or bulky.

2 Care

If you're touring, look for quick-drying fabrics that will stand frequent washing.

3 Pockets

When off the bike, sightseeing for example, decent-sized

pockets are extremely useful, especially if zipped or designed so it's difficult for items to fall out. Some feature reflective material for added safety at night.

4 Cut and fit

Cycling shorts shouldn't gape at the back or impinge at the front; look for a slightly higher cut at rear. Consider the fit at the thigh too for possible combination with legwarmers. If the waist-to-crotch measurement is deep enough, you can wear a shorts liner underneath.

5 Durability

Look for strong seams and fastenings. A double seat (double thickness fabric) is a nice feature.



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Verdict

Shimano and Giro offer a very similar product at the same price point. Given Giro's seamed gusset, the Transit Path from Shimano, which also has groovy pockets, is the one I'd pick from these two.

The Velocity Women's Climber with its turn-ups wins my prize for the most flair and urban chic – and is made in the UK. I really enjoyed wearing these for shorter commutes. For full day rides, Endura's Trekkit suited my riding position and saddle, but I would have liked a tighter fit on the liner.



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1 Velocity Women's Climber Shorts
£84
velocitycycwear.cc

THESE SHORTS ARE designed and made in London, and have a double seat, diamond gusset, piped pockets, and turn-ups. I loved them. They could have been slightly higher cut at the back, but a long base layer solved this for me. The shorts score high on style and urban chic, and work well on shorter trips. They're 98% cotton and only 2% elastane, which doesn't sound much but does produce adequate stretch. I'd say the price is fair and reflects the amount of careful handwork and haberdashery involved.

▼ **Quite expensive but well constructed and very stylish.**

2 Shimano Women's Transit Path Shorts
£59.99 madison.cc

THESE ARE EXCELLENT, packable casual shorts with a stylish and practical amount of detail in the design. The concealed rear pockets are trimmed in reflective material, using a sophisticated 'welt' tailoring method, and fastened with oversized screwhead-pattern press-studs. **Cool!** Front pockets are deep and cut so contents are unlikely to fall out. I found them comfortable to wear all day but for longer periods in the saddle I'd consider a shorts liner. The cut suits the purpose intended and the 'raven' colour is easy to match tops to.

▼ **A good fit at a fair price point but I wouldn't mind a liner.**

3 Endura Women's Trekkit Short
£44.99 endurasport.com

THIS IS THE only pair of shorts tested that features an integral shorts liner, and the only pair I was happy to wear to ride over three passes in the Lakes – with no soreness whatsoever. This Scottish company deserves its reputation for durability, style and functionality that's well-suited to British weather. There's a low front and 'flattering waistband'. The liner has grippers that work; they didn't ride up at all, and the outer fabric falls in such a way as to not look like a pair of shorts with a padded liner. The concealed, zipped rear pocket is spacious.

▼ **Great design and comfortable for long days in the saddle.**

4 Giro Venture II Women's Baggy Shorts
£59.99 zyrofischer.co.uk

Although rather spacious, these shorts worked okay worn over traditional lycra shorts. Then I noticed the diamond gusset has a seam across it, which rather defeats the object. The style of the Venture II is otherwise very similar to the Shimano Transit Path shorts, the main difference being an invisible zip pocket just large enough for a key or an emergency tenner. The fly zip is full metal and the fabric is extremely soft to the touch, super light, and packs down nice and small. Durable and water repellent.

▼ **Soft and lightweight shorts – just need to move the gusset seam.**