

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

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media.co.uk



Pros & cons

- + Great price
- + Fits most bikes
- Cage feels less sturdy than alternatives

Podsacs

Waterproof Saddle Pack (Small) £20

Tarpaulin Fork Dry Bag & Cage £19.99

Weatherproof bikepacking luggage at entry-level prices

planetx.co.uk

Bikepacking gear often comes with a premium price tag. Podsacs gear doesn't. It should be affordable for most people and, just as importantly, fit most bikes.

At 9L capacity, the small saddle pack (there's also an 11L large) doesn't have a lot of room. The design is narrow at the base, so it's difficult packing awkward-shaped items like pans. The black, floating liner makes it more

waterproof but also harder to find anything stowed inside. Half the base is rigid – heavy-duty plastic, I'd imagine. I'd worry about that wearing a hole in the outer fabric over time, especially if the non-rigid part of the bag droops during the ride.

Scotchlite 3M reflective accents and LED light mounts should help you be seen in the dark, and the bungee is great for stuffing a jacket into. The two elastic loops

on the underside are largely pointless: gear attached here is likely to end up dirty or lost. With this style of seat pack, shorter riders risk it hitting the rear wheel on rough terrain, which could damage the bag.

The dry-bag with fork cage is very similar to the Salsa Anything HD Cage and accompanying bag – except a third the price. Like the beefier Salsa versions, these cages attach by three bolts to the fork legs. There's a kit with cable ties and hose clamps for forks without triple mounts, but I'd want at least a low-rider mount so the cage could be bolted securely at one point.

The cages have nylon straps to hold the bags. These are simple, with a flat base so they can stand upright. The straps are a bit fiddly but at this price you could readily afford some Voile straps and use them instead. Each bag has a 4-litre capacity – ideal for tools, cooking kit, a jacket, or a lightweight sleeping bag. ●

Sam Jones

Other options



PASSPORT SEATPACK £55

Not much different from the Podsacs seatpack apart from colour and price. The Passport bag has two handy zipped pockets – up to you if that's worth £35 more!

passportcycles.co.uk



SALSA ANYTHING CAGE HD £34

Expensive, especially as the Anything Bags are another £34 each, but sturdy and long-time favourites among the bikepacking community. Mine are three years old.

salsacycles.com

Verdict

It's hard to fault Podsacs' budget-priced range of bags. They're ideal for those who want to try bikepacking without breaking the bank.



Cycle's test promise

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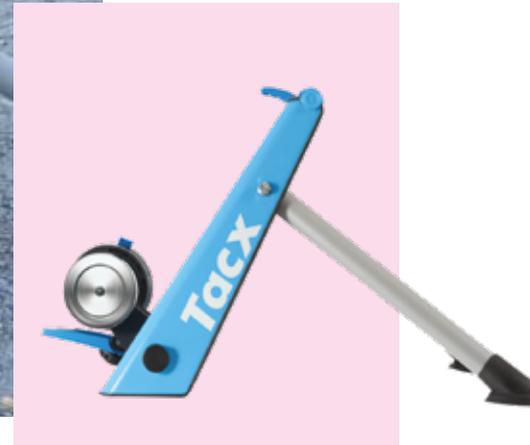
Pros & cons

- + Stable
- + Quiet, smooth operation
- Setting switch

Tacx Blue Matic

A simple but well-made magnetic turbo trainer with variable resistance

tacx.com £149.00



The jury is still out on the best way to provide pedalling resistance in a home or static trainer, although the simplest – a fan to thrash the air – is today largely unloved due to its noisy operation. The market for basic home trainers is dominated by devices using either fluid or magnetic resistance units, the former using oil forced around the inside of a sealed unit by an impeller. The latter type uses magnets to slow the rotation of the drive roller, and allows the resistance level at any given speed of roller rotation to be adjusted over a number of settings. This is done using a dial on the resistance unit or remotely via a switch usually mounted on the handlebar for convenience.

A session on the crisply-designed and well-made Tacx Blue Matic magnetic trainer demonstrates the effect of

changing resistance. In the lowest of ten settings, the unit is smooth, slip-free, and spins up quickly even under aggressive pedalling efforts in a big gear; in the highest setting, it feels somewhat like climbing a super-steep gradient in the saddle, and there's noticeable slip between tyre and steel roller under hard effort even with the latter's engagement lever cranked up. Maximum resistance is stated as 700W. What happens beyond that is unclear but expect to get very hot trying to reach it!

As with all Tacx products, the fit and finish are impressive. The trainer needs some straightforward assembly – the test model was shipped with the wrong instruction leaflet – using a hex key provided. It is very stable when set up thanks to the

four support points provided by the main frame and two fold-out legs. The roller engagement lever's adjustment mechanism – a large plastic hand wheel on the end of a captive bolt threaded into a toggle bar – is a bit loose in operation, and the resistance lever clamp slipped on my carbon-fibre handlebar, but the flip-lever clamping the special quick-release skewer is very precise and is paired with a firm, easily-operated adjustment screw.

The Blue Matic can also be used fitted with a Tacx speed and cadence sensor (available separately), allowing it to measure a 'virtual' – calculated rather than measured – power output that can be used with various training apps, including Zwift. ●

Richard Hallett

Verdict

Stable, easy to set up and offering a wide resistance range, the Blue Matic is an impressive entry-level home trainer with potential for more involved training activity.

Other options

SARIS MAG TRAINER £150

Formerly the CycleOps Mag Trainer, this magnetic trainer has its resistance adjuster incorporated into the unit. No cables.

saris.com



ELITE CHRONO FLUID ELASTOGEL TRAINER £199

Smooth-acting, slip-free fluid trainer with an unusual set-up arrangement.

elite-it.com



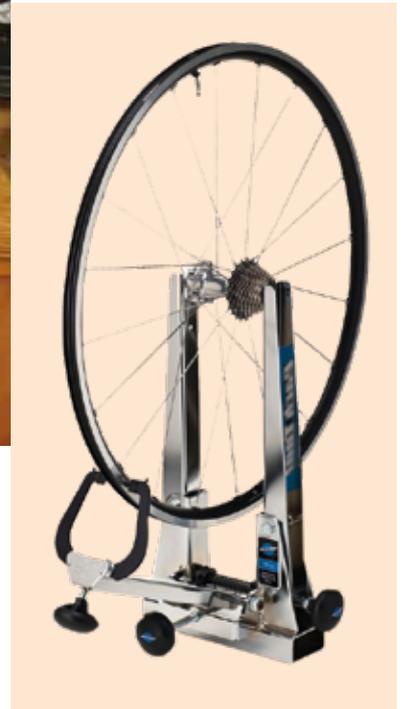
Pros & cons

- + Adapters for various hubs from 80-175mm
- + Fully serviceable
- Expensive for occasional use

Park Tool
TS-2.2
Wheel
Truing
Stand

Workshop-quality stand fit for a lifetime of wheel building and repair

parktool.com **£199.95**



Anyone thinking now's the time to keep a fleet of bicycles on the road, whether for yourself, the family, or a community project, will know that a pair of true and tensioned wheels are fundamental to performance and reliability.

This wheel truing jig comes from Minnesota-based bicycle toolmakers Park Tool. The model tested is designed to give a lifetime's service, and there's no doubting that. It's an extremely robust, easy to use, and fully rebuildable bit of kit. Owning this as a community organisation, bike shop, or home workshop will enable you to build and true wheels for decades – providing you know what you're doing!

The problem with more basic jigs is flex. If this triggers vibration, it makes reading rim deflection frustratingly difficult. A wheel jig must be stable. It should

also be positioned with good lighting and the right height to work at comfortably. The TS-2.2 is designed to be clamped into a bench vice or paired with a dedicated tilting base (£50). You'll also need a dishing tool (from £30) and spoke tensiometer (from £70), as well the correct spoke keys to fit subtly different spoke nipple sizes. The TS-2.2 sprung caliper arms can be set to act as a dishing tool but this will require calibration (Park Tool do a tool for that too); a separate dishing tool ensures ultimate accuracy.

A couple of nice features are the indicator arm tip covers to protect painted or carbon rims, and there's a conveniently placed white background as you look down to assess rim deflection.

If you're just getting starting

with wheel building, you'll want a guide too. Park Tool publish the Big Blue Book of Bicycle Repair (BBB4) and have a plethora of branded online tutorials. The book is £19.99 to download and includes a new wheel building section. Roger Musson (wheelpro.co.uk) and David Meadows (dcrwheels.co.uk) both offer very comprehensive downloadable manuals for around £10. For full-on theory there's The Bicycle Wheel by Jobst Brandt or Gerd Schraner's The Art of Wheelbuilding, pitched more at mere mortals. Or you could book yourself onto an accredited course, such as bikeinn.co.uk. ●

Liz Colebrook

Verdict

Built in hardened steel and powder-coated, it's designed for long service. It's adjustable to take a wide range of wheel diameters, hubs types, and rim widths.

Other options

TACX EXACT WHEEL TRUING STAND
£62.99

Durable and low-cost. For thru-axles, use with Abbey Tools' £47 Geisler truing-stand adapter. tacx.com



BIKE HAND WHEEL TRUING STAND
YC-512NB £130

Similar to the Park Tool one but much cheaper – just £80 at Spa Cycles at time of writing. bikehand.com/en

