

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

- + Super quick to set up
- + Lightweight (200g)
- Not usable down hills or slopes



TowWhee

Bungee & Quick Loop

A simple way to tow your tired child uphill

£39.99 & £9.99 gonebikingmad.co.uk

When your child gets tired cycling uphill, you either push them up with one hand while riding or dismount and walk. Alternatively, there's the TowWhee: a stretchy and strong bungee cord inside tough, hollow webbing.

We (me, husband, son aged nine, and daughter aged seven) tested it using our mountain bikes. As well as the bungee, we had the optional 'Quick Loop and Carabiner'. You secure the Quick Loop around the spacers

on the headset of your child's bike (don't attach it to the handlebar). Then you attach one end of the TowWhee around your saddle and the other end, via the carabiner, to the Quick Loop. It's really simple to set up, and although it looks like it might slip off the saddle it didn't do so for us.

You should only use a TowWhee going uphill; down a steep hill, your child may crash into the back of you. So if you're towing a tired child all the way home, you'll need to stop

and remove the TowWhee for downhill sections. They should be able to tackle these with more confidence, however, as they'll have more energy.

I was worried that when it reached the end of its stretch (4.5m), the bungee would twitch or jerk. It didn't. It still provided a smooth ride.

We tested it on road, grass, and off-road trails. It handles well in all of these situations. On gnarly singletrack, your child will have to steer. It also obviously helps if your child can pedal, even if it is just a little bit. It's no harder than towing a trailer with toddlers in, and feels a bit like you are in the wrong gear and have to pedal a bit harder.

Would I like to tow my seven-year-old for more than 15 minutes up a steep hill? Probably not, but I'm sure those who love hills more than me will. ●

Victoria Hazael

Other options



FOLLOWME TANDEM £209.95

While much heavier than the TowWhee, it's rigid enough for off-road riding and also lets you tow downhill. It's what we used as a family when the kids were aged 4-6.

followmetandem.co.uk



TRAIL ANGEL PLUS £89.99

Works more like a tag-along, lifting up your child's front wheel, but there is no chance of them speeding up crashing in to you. Halfords stocks it.

trail-angel.com/eng

Verdict

While my daughter resisted using this ["It's for babies!"], it's a clever bit of kit that best suits mountain biking families. It helps you all cycle together without older children feeling frustrated they are waiting for the smaller one.



Cycle's test promise

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Pros & cons
 + Works with 10-speed Campag shifters
 – Doesn't with older 10-speed Shimano road shifters

Shimano GRX RX400 rear mech

Big 36T-sprocket capacity mech for 10-speed road bikes

£59.99 bike.shimano.com

I've used a 9-speed MTB mech (XT Shadow) with 10-speed Ultegra STI to shift an 11-36 cassette on my road bike for some time. It's always worked – even better since I fitted 10-speed XT pulleys. But Shimano now makes mountain-sized road mechs for gravel biking. According to their USA website, GRX is compatible with your existing parts, provided the speeds correspond. And in particular: "Shimano GRX 400 components work great with the 10-speed Tiagra road groupset".

It turns out that's not the whole story: GRX is compatible only if your existing parts *didn't exist* before 2016, the year in which Shimano tweaked their one remaining 10-speed road group to shift like 11-speed. (I missed the news of that change – if there was any. There should've been; it was our last chance to buy compatible

spares of good quality.)

The GRX RX400 rear mech does not work *at all* with 10-speed Ultegra because it needs more cable pulled per click. Not a lot more (like Sram and Shimano MTB 10-speed) but just a little – like Campag. Since I had 10-speed Ergopower on my tourer (shifting a Shimergo-modified XT Shadow mech), plus a spare 10-speed chain and 11-36 cassette, I swapped those and the GRX RX400 mech onto that bike. And there it did "work great"! So Shimano have accidentally made a mech with near enough the right shift-ratio to marry a Campagnolo 10-speed shifter with any 10-speed MTB cassette. Better still: it has the cable adjuster now missing from MTB mechs.

Why don't I try the other GRX components? Money. Hydraulic levers are nice but would require

new brakes. And I don't like the double chainset, which accepts only slightly smaller rings of 30 and 46T and has a 50mm chainline: too far out for smooth running in big-and-big – or even next-to-big! My truncated triple, on the other hand, boasts a 24T inner and aligns its 42T middle, that is outer, ring with the exact centre of the cassette.

Details: max sprocket size, 32–36; capacity, 41T; weight: 303g. ●

Chris Juden

Verdict

If you want lower gears on your Campag 10-speed bike, or with new Tiagra, Shimano's RD-RX400 is a neat solution. Fit XT sealed pulleys when the originals wear out.



Other options



▲ **SHIMANO 9-SPEED MTB 'SHADOW' MECH** ~£50

For example: Deore RD-M592. Works with pre-2016 10-spd road STI – even better with 10-spd pulleys.

bike.shimano.com



▲ **SUNRACE SP570 HANGER EXTENDER** £10

Cheap but may shift vaguely at small end of cassette.

sunrace.com

Pearl Izumi

Men's Rove Short Sleeve Shirt

Casual style belies good on-the-bike performance in warm weather

£59.99 freewheel.co.uk



Pros & cons

- + Wicks well
- + Long back
- Not cheap

There's something to be said for cycle-specific clothing that looks normal. The price tag may be higher but it tends to last longer. Bikes (or maybe it's just me?) are not kind to many clothes.

Usually I'm a natural fibre man – cotton or wool – but unless its merino (and who wears wool in summer?) you're either going to have a damp, sweaty top or you'll overheat. So I was pleasantly surprised with the Rove Short Sleeve. While the shirt feels a lot like cotton (it's 57% cotton, 40% recycled polyester, 3% elastane), the ride into the office, which usually makes me a little sweaty, left me bone dry. Since then, on my forays up and down the Surrey Hills, I've been impressed by this 'no sweat' shirt. At the end

of the ride it often looks largely pristine and fresh. Several washes later, it's still looking good.

It's well shaped to fit when riding, with no pinching over the shoulders, nor revealing of flesh between shirt and shorts. I'm a 38in chest and the medium fitted well. The buttons are poppers – easily fastened and undone. I found that when riding hunched over, it was more comfortable to undo the lowest. There's a standard chest pocket on the left, and a little 'loose change' pocket on the inside.

It comes in either 'Italian

football shirt' blue ('lapis') or grey ('turbulence'). The blue is a vibrant colour and has little bicycle prints all over it; the grey appears to have bike tools. These are only really noticeable close up. It also has reflective strips for low light, the largest being on the tail of the shirt. By itself it's not enough, but coupled with lights and reflectors this is a nice little extra feature. ●

Sam Jones



Other options

MORVELO TRACT OVERLAND SS SHIRT £75

An 'adventure sport' shirt with two hidden pockets on the back, each of which can fit a beer bottle.

morvelo.com



ALPKIT ORTEGA (M) & ESTELLA (F) £49

Reported to have a cotton feel despite man-made fabrics, this is for 'active summers'. It should wick sweat and keep you cool.

alpkit.com



Verdict

A collared shirt that wicks well and is smart enough for casual offices. The longer back prevents you exposing skin when hunched over the bars.