



Left: Mudguards and a cape keep you drier and less sweaty than a waterproof jacket and trousers
Below: Dan's Brompton bag (cape packed inside) is waterproof but a rain cover works well enough
Below left: Both bikes have a front mudguard or mudflap long enough for dry feet. Most don't



Commuter

For a commuter, mudguards aren't something you attach to your bike in October. They're a permanent fixture. Bikes designed for urban riding such as Bromptons and city hybrids often come with them. If you're riding to work in normal clothes, you always want to arrive clean and dry.

That's the reason Carradice's Pro Route Cape (£49.95, **carradice.co.uk**) tops my list of commuter essentials after mudguards. Capes have fallen out of fashion but unlike most waterproofs they do actually keep you dry when it's properly raining – at least from the knees up. Since air can circulate, you don't boil-in-a-bag like you do in a waterproof jacket and trousers. The cape covers your hands so, on days that are wet but not especially cold, you can go without gloves.

While the cape comes with a hood, a



traditional cycling cap like the Van Rysel RoadR 520 (£7.99, **decathlon.co.uk**) keeps the rain out of your eyes (or off your glasses) better and doesn't restrict peripheral vision. It can be worn by itself, under a helmet and with a snood/multi-tube to keep your ears warm.

Waterproof cycling luggage is the best option for regular commuters. But a single Ortlieb pannier would consume most of our £100 budget and a Brompton-specific bag would smash it. The next best thing is a rain cover. The Brompton Rain Resistant Front Luggage Cover (£11, **brompton.com**) is one option. For non-waterproof panniers – or backpacks, though they won't work with a cape – there's the Altura Nightvision Waterproof Cycling Raincover 20–30L (£20, **altura.co.uk**).

Lights are non-negotiable for commuting in autumn and winter (**cyclinguk.org/lighting-regulations**). We've tested some for urban riding

this issue (p58–60). Although not super expensive, the better ones in this review would leave little left over for other commuter essentials. So it's back to Halfords (**halfords.com**), where you can buy a pair of reasonably bright, rechargeable be-seen lights for £20: the Halfords 50 Lumen Front Bike Light and the Halfords 25 Lumen Rear Bike Light. They won't light your way on dark lanes but they'll make you conspicuous around town.

Reliable journey times are more important than ride feel or rolling efficiency for commuting, so tougher tyres are a wise investment. Schwalbe's Marathon Plus is £43.99 per tyre and Continental's Contact Plus £41.95. Either should last for ages, while shrugging off shards of glass or other urban detritus. But with insufficient cash in the £100 commuter kitty, Zefal Puncture Repair Spray 75ml (£4.99, **zefal.com**) should at least get you rolling again if you suffer a flat. It's designed to seal the hole and re-inflate the tyre. Buy tougher tyres when you can.

Finally, you'll need some chain lube. To keep costs down, Halfords' own again gets the nod. →

Commuter essentials

- Carradice Pro Route Cape £49.95
- Van Rysel RoadR 520 Cycling Cap £7.99
- Brompton Rain Resistant Front Luggage Cover £11
- Halfords 50 Lumen Front Bike Light £10
- Halfords 25 Lumen Rear Bike Light £10
- Zefal Puncture Repair Spray, 75ml £4.99
- Halfords All Weather Lube 100ml £5

TOTAL £98.93