

These are a bit scuffed from a crash. They survived it well



SPIRGRIPS

SPIRGRIPS+ Composite MTB

£63.75, spirgrips.com

Wide, flat handlebars are good for bike control but lock you into a fixed riding position that can make your hands, wrists, back and neck ache. Hence alternative bars (cyclinguk.org/alt-bars) and the original mountain biking solution: bar ends. Bar ends don't work well with a wide bar, however. They spread your arms too wide, clip trees and hook foliage.

Unless you fit them inboard! Inner bar ends is an oxymoron but you know what I mean. I've used bar ends like this on a few bikes, including the Stooge I reviewed (cyclinguk.org/stooge-dirt-tracker). Spirgrips are the same concept, refined.

The unusual 'Shrek's ears' shape helps stop your hands sliding off as the flare keeps them in place, while the bulbous grip section aims for better ergonomics. A Comfort Pad – silicone rubber, I think – fits to the bar-end body for grip and, as the name says, comfort. Various colours are available.

The Spirgrips are stubby, extending just 55mm from the handlebar. They're intended to be fitted between grip and brake lever. (Fitting is easy as they have a hinged clamp.) With your hands on the Spirgrips, you can still operate the brakes, albeit not as well. But that proximity leads to the only real downside: depending on how horizontal you like your brake levers and Spirgrips, how prominent your bike's brake reservoirs are and how big your hands are, there's not a lot of finger room. I have thin, typist's hands and didn't have a problem.

The extra hand position does improve overall comfort. It makes out-of-the-saddle climbing easier. And it improves your aerodynamics when slogging along a road or fire-road, because your frontal area is reduced. All that's worth a 111g weight penalty and arguably justifies the price.

There is a cheaper option, the Spirgrips One (from £42.42), said

Other options



SQLAB INNERBARENDS 410/402 £29.99

Same idea but half the price. The clamp isn't hinged, so fitting isn't as straightforward. Claimed weight is 110g for the pair. sq-lab.com



BBB LIGHTSTRAIGHT BAR ENDS £23.99

Want to experiment with inner bar ends before spending £60 and don't have any spares in a box? These 95mm BBB ones will do the job.

bbbcycling.com

Verdict

Spirgrips are a better and more expensive alternative to fitting your old bar ends inboard. They're more comfortable and your grip is more secure. Different sizes to suit smaller or larger hands better would be nice.

to suit larger hands better, and a dearer, lighter carbon-fibre version (from £84.15). All three models are available in versions to fit the tops of drop bars as well. ●

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