

**O**n a cycling holiday less really is more. Not because you can ride more miles in a day (although you can) but because the less you carry the easier the cycling becomes, allowing more time and attention to be given to what you've come this way to see.

Have we lost the art of travelling light? Old CTC Gazettes show riders touring with no more than a saddlebag, whereas the modern tourist is likely to have four bulging panniers or even a trailer! I'm as guilty as the next man of excess cycling baggage, but we've had loads of great tips from CTC members, many of which I've incorporated into this article – with the rest on our website. I'm pleased to find we still know how to travel light at CTC!

### Luggage

People often ask me which pannier holds more. Silly question! According to *Packinson's Law*, the load increases to fill the space available. Impose some discipline by settling on a smaller bag. A 20-litre saddlebag should be enough for any accommodated tour, and means that almost any kind of bike can be

used for touring. Carradice saddlebags, usually attached by an SQR fitting to a seatpost, were the choice for most of our lightweight tipsters. The weight is held so close to the saddle that it has little more effect upon handling than a heavier rider might. The 'longflap' design allows the bag to expand for extra capacity. Also note the loops by which additional loads can be strapped on top.

If you can't manage to squeeze your load into a saddlebag, try two front or universal panniers attached to the rear rack. I'd always add a handlebar bag too, to keep my camera handy and all valuables safe on my shoulder when it's parked. The Ortlieb Compact handlebar bag is small enough to travel light and will also keep those valuables dry. I shorten the shoulder strap so it can remain attached – there must be no excuse to leave this bag on the bike.

When considering luggage options people often overlook the weight of the bag and hardware for its support, and fail to set that against what it'll carry. Beam racks are awfully inefficient, weighing a lot and carrying little. And two small bags are less efficient than one large, but I wouldn't recommend the mono pannier, any more than a bike that's out of track! (The effect on handling is similar.) You really cannot do better than

# Travelling

It's very easy to take more than you need by bike.

**Chris Juden** looks at how and why to travel with less





the good old-fashioned saddlebag. If your saddle is high enough you might not even need a rear carrier, and if not you still don't need much of a carrier.

Some exponents of travelling light take this to extremes. To read how visit <http://www2.arnes.si/~ikovse/weight.htm>. Even if you don't want to go that light, you'll find a lot of useful tips there.

### Clothes

To travel light you've got to do laundry – little and often. For a price, some hotels will wash your riding kit overnight and have it ready to wear the next morning, which suits the titanium bike and gold credit card class of cycle-tourist. A group may club together to split the laundry bill – which takes some organisation, however!

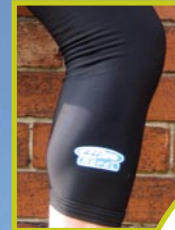
Mostly it's a matter of stripping in the shower and treading the grapes every night. For this you'll want a block of strong soap. Before festooning the radiators, balcony and curtain rails: lay your wet clothes on the bath towel, roll it longways, put a foot on one end and twist hard, having personally made do with the hand towel of course.

No item of clothing merits a place in your luggage unless it can be worn in many different situations. Long

trousers for evening wear must also be good on the bike in case of cold weather. Shorts with zip-on legs are most versatile. Cycling tops must also pass as casual shirts for off bike wear, likewise your thermal vest, and that rain jacket will also be worn on nocturnal strolls about town.

Cycling shoes must also be good for walking, which means recessed cleats (e.g. SPD). The Exustar Stelvio is good, due to its deeply recessed cleat and low-key black leather upper (good water resistance and normal appearance).

You need to regard your clothes as one system, and layering is the watchword. Arm warmers and knee warmers are essential components of this system, added to tees and shorts they each substitute another whole garment. Here's what you might have on when the weather does its worst. On top: thermal vest, short sleeved shirt, arm warmers, fleece, rain jacket, waterproof hat. Below: lycra shorts, knee warmers, shorts with legs zipped on, rainlegs, waterproof socks, shoes, shoe-covers. That's the whole system. All you'll have left in your bag will be the



Knee warmers beat cycling tights. Carradice's excellent Camper Longflap. Stelvio Exustar shoes



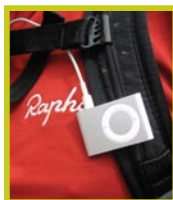
# light







(Above) Ortlieb Compact bar bag for valuables: 2.7L of waterproof storage  
(Right) Merino wool jersey and a 19g, 1Gb MP3 player



reserve short-sleeved top and lycras, underpants and two pairs of sports socks, plus nothing heavier than flip-flops for indoors and when your cycling shoes are sodden.

On nicer days, and let's hope most days are nice, you'll wear only some of those items. Most of that clothing will seldom be next to your skin when riding, so will not need washing too often. Seize the moment to do so when the next day's forecast is sunny, so you'll not need to wear those items and can dry them on the outside of your luggage as you ride.

All items should be quick drying, which generally means a man-made fibre, but several of our tipsters sing the praises of pure merino wool. It dries quickly enough and remains

warm meanwhile, but its ace card is the natural anti-bacterial property of this fibre, which reduces odours.

Washing and drying clothes is more difficult when camping, but less necessary – except in the saddle department! You may want a third pair of lycra shorts. Prolonged wet weather is also a problem, but usually cold so less sweaty. Sometimes, nevertheless, you'll have to wear something that is a bit smelly. Get over it. Cycling is honest toil: take pride in your sweat!

Some countries with a markedly non-European culture may present the cycle-tourist with other clothing options, for off-bike wear at least, or even require it. Local garments are always well-suited to the climate and may also be good for riding. Seriously consider ditching the trousers and hiding your lycra under a sarong or lungi.

It's only in the last few decades that many Europeans have deemed it necessary to wear special clothes for cycling. Before then people toured just as far in a day in the clothes of the day, albeit chosen carefully to avoid bulky seams in uncomfortable places. That



Main photo & previous: Cass Gilbert. Others by Chris Juden, Dan Joyce, Dave Barter & Sheila Simpson

## LIGHTEN THE LOAD

A selection of your travel tips. You can find more on the website, [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)  
› Road and Touring

### Packing

- Try to pack everything in a shoe box first and see if you can do it. Then buy a saddlebag the same size as the shoe box. *John Bland*
- Don't spend too much time planning on what to take – the

longer you think about it the more you will end up thinking you may need! *Phil Nelson*

- On tour in the Alps we met two Swiss cyclists who were using only bottle cages, three on each bike, to hold all of their gear. They both nevertheless produced a pair of leisure shorts and clean shirt for dinner in the evening! *Robert & Hazel Shiels*
- Pack both panniers the week

before you go and then see which you can do without! *Paul Martin*

- Lay out everything on the floor before you pack and look for any further reductions possible. *Simon Marr*

### Clothing tips

- I once met a bloke who toured with only three socks. He wore them in rotation, clean to left, left to right, right to wash.

Repeat every day! *Ian Seaton*

- Washing powder is lighter and less bulky than clothes. Even if you get wet, most countries have laundrettes. *Phil Nelson*
- Merino wool cycle jerseys and underwear are cool when it's hot, warm when it's cool and can be worn for days (even months!) without washing as they don't smell. *Pippa Eliot & John Hand*
- Weigh all your clothes

## “The load increases to fill the space available. To impose discipline, use a smaller bag”

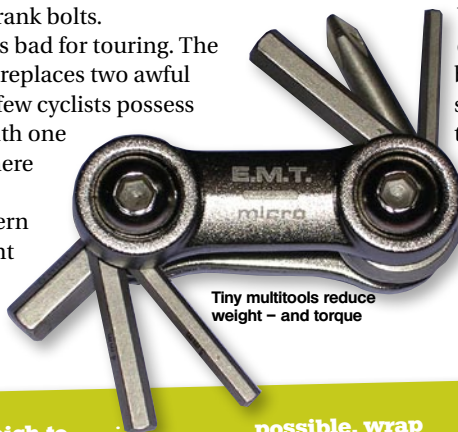
strategy works as well as it ever did, can reduce the size of your touring wardrobe and is especially recommended for holidays that mix riding and off-bike sightseeing etc.

### Tools

The design focus has shifted from bikes as a means of transport (that might also be raced), to an item of sporting equipment that might also be used to go places. It's starting to shift back again, but for the time being, component designs prioritise performance over durability, with repairs requiring spares that will only fit that part. Time was when most things could be fixed to with an adjustable spanner and screwdriver. Nowadays a loose screw may require any of several metric sizes of allen key, torx, or flat or cross-point driver.

You can reduce your tool requirements by careful choice of components and changing a few fasteners. Fit self-extractor bolts on your cranks and that's one special tool you can leave at home. Before settling on a multi-tool, though, check it can reach and turn everything. As well as having more length and leverage the few necessary allen keys might weigh less, whilst flat and cross-point screwdrivers are already provided by your Swiss-Army knife. Beware that a multi-tool may be too short to reach some screws, too long to get into tight corners, whilst the tool itself is too small or weak to turn high torque fasteners such as crank bolts.

Not all progress is bad for touring. The threadless headset replaces two awful big spanners (that few cyclists possess and fewer carry) with one allen key. In fact, there are so few spanner flats on some modern bikes that you might plan to borrow an adjustable in



Tiny multitools reduce weight – and torque

the unlikely event of need – but make sure your pedals also have a hex socket. Meanwhile globalisation of the cycle market ensures that availability of a replacement sprocket for your 'British' bike will be just the same in most other countries – or better in some!

This is obvious but has to be said: the time and place to mend your bike is before the holiday, at home, where your tools are. I've carried a toolkit weighed down by all the things I've seen go wrong, but those things mostly happened to other people's bikes. So now I often travel with very few tools.

Don't bring any tool you don't know how to use. Can't true wheels? Omit the nipple key. If you need one you'll also need a man who does, and usually he'll have his own. To travel light is to travel hopefully. Pessimists need not apply!

### Gadgets and personal

Some cyclists will carry an MP3 player, and even more a mobile phone. Now our cameras are digital, GPS/satnav is all the rage and a PDA could come in handy... Never before have travellers been tempted to carry so many electronic gadgets, each with their own type of battery and charger. A bit of standardisation would help, but third party devices are available that can charge several different types of battery with interchangeable plugs for phones etc. Most are neither very small nor lightweight, but if the bike also has battery lighting, something that'll charge everything including that makes sense.

The high-tech strategy cuts the number of gadgets by choosing one that does several jobs. You can now get phones with PDA functionality, that play music, incorporate okay cameras (fine for snapshots) and even GPS. The low tech strategy declares a curse on



GPS is handy and lightweight, but you'll need to take a charger with you when touring

before choosing which to pack – you'll be surprised at the weight range in the same garment. *Simon Hydon*

- Buy cheap silk shirts instead of T-shirts. They wash and dry quickly, they weigh less and roll up to almost nothing and look good without ironing. *Jeff Allen*
- One set of smalls is all that's needed. Wash them out last thing at night, wring them as hard as

possible, wrap them in a towel as tightly as possible, sit on it for 5 minutes, then shake them out for overnight drying. *Ann Spencer*

- ...and if they're still damp at breakfast time put them on the teapot! *Helen Juden*
- Take foam flip-flops instead of spare shoes and cut any excess parts off them for extra weight saving. *Simon Marr*

### Tools & other essentials

- Forget the chain tool. Use a Sram powerlink (it also fits Shimano chains). *Chris Juden*
- Fix spare spokes, emergency £20 note, etc, inside your seatpost and down the seat tube. *Paul Ho*
- Try fixed-wheel: fewer tools needed, less to go wrong. *Elgar Dickinson*
- Use only gadgets with the same battery type. Lights, GPS,

MP3 etc. Mine all use AAA. *Chris Marten*

- Consider getting a PDA. On mine I have scans of guidebooks, e-books to read as well as digital maps. *Andy Miller*
- A small tin of vaseline is useful for body parts and bike parts! *Maureen Nichols*
- Don't take the whole guidebook, pull out the relevant pages. *Gaenor Price*



# “The key to lightweight cycle camping is what you can do without – starting with the tent”



electrickery, relies on payphones, sticks to the good old film camera, maps, a paperback book for entertainment (and source of toilet tissue!) and runs a dynamo.

Maps can be a problem. Pages torn from a road atlas and a sense of adventure will do for some, or petrol station maps can be picked up cheaply and discarded on the way. The more discerning tourist may need to maildrop detailed maps in advance in order to avoid carrying a load of paper. Post Restante, where available, may also be useful for other things you expect to run out of on longer tours.

Hairdryers and electric razors (for me, any razor) are out of the question. And when it comes to toiletries, hotel tourists can rely upon the selection provided every night. A hotel once in three nights will do the rest of us too! Have toothbrush will travel! Speaking of which, complimentary airline toiletry kits are recommended by several of our tipsters. Towels need not be carried by hotel tourists and even hostels will rent you one. Otherwise we have a host of tips for lightweight substitutes (pack towels, j-cloths etc.) which will do if you sponge off most of the wet first.



Topeak's 1.35kg bath-tub style Bikamper EXP. Swiss army knife and spork. Uniross travel charger is 70g – see June/July 06, p58

## Camping

Is it possible to travel light and camp? Let us ask CTC's founding father Thomas Hiram Holding, who also started the Association of Lightweight Campers and was pictured in the Daily Mail of 1914, dressed in smart-looking overcoat, with all of the necessary equipment 'concealed about his person!' The question rather becomes: is it still possible?

There are now so many things to make your campsite a home from home. Each is made from the latest lightweight materials and nests or folds ingeniously, but they all weigh something and occupy some space. So the key to lightweight cycle camping is what you can

do without, starting with the tent! A groundsheet and tarp is less than half the weight and bulk. But remember a tarp is open to the midgie and take a mosquito net wherever they're found. If the weather turns too bad for a tarp it's not much fun in a tent either, so treat yourself to a B&B, hostel, camping barn – or simply a barn!

In sleeping bags go for quality (it's expensive but you can't beat genuine down) and summer weight. Add a sheet liner when it's cold, useful on its own when hot, and sleep in some of your clothes if it gets really cold.

Don't cook. It saves a whole load of equipment, time and trouble to dine out whenever you want a hot meal. Treat yourself: you are on holiday. Cold food otherwise is just as nutritious, really, but if you simply can't get going without a hot drink, or yearn for the comfort of soup, a very light meths stove can be made from a can – see [zenstoves.net](http://zenstoves.net).

Eating equipment for a non-cooker comprises the Swiss-Army knife, spork and mug. For minimal cooking add a bowl/pan.

## Unbearable lightness?

This article assumes you'll be taking your holidays at a time and place with nice weather, like most people do, including most of our tipsters. But you can't absolutely rely upon the weather, especially in these days of changing climate, so mind how you draw the line between lightweight and ill-equipped!

As CTC tour leader Fleur Woolley says: 'I've been on trips where I haven't even used my bike pump, let alone the tools and spares. Sometimes you don't use a waterproof, or any of the warm clothes in your bag, but it would be foolish to tour without them.'

Don't feel intimidated by the extremes to which some cyclists go to save weight. Maybe you'd rather press the pedals harder than go without whatever it is (a bigger tent, an SLR camera, a cuddly toy ...). And if you want to explore somewhere reliably cold and wet and unpopulated, northern Norway for example, travelling light may not be a sensible option.



- Superdrug do an excellent selection of travel size toiletries and sun creams. *Anne Doyle*
- Take the minimum of clothes by carrying a small tube of 'Travel Wash' and a 'Lifeventure' bungee washing line. The twisted double-cord bungee allows you to dry laundry without pegs. *Chris Williamson*
- Solid Shampoo: I use this for hair, body, washing clothes and even dishwashing when

needed. A shampoo bar in its tin (72g) will last at least two weeks on a camping tour. Solid Deodorant: A 5g piece is plenty. *Fleur Woolley*

### Camping tips

- Use a one-season sleeping bag and take along a down jacket. The jacket serves as my coat, can be used as a duvet to supplement the sleeping bag's insulation, or used as

### a pillow. *Rob Seeley*

- For a subtle tent lantern: inflate a white poly bag and secure over an LED bike headlight. *Graham Ricketts*
- I've got my gear down to around 8kg by using a tarpent (Henry Shires Contrail), 3/4 length Prolite Thermarest, and an ME Helium down bag (v small indeed). *ciuffolotto*
- Don't bring a plate, bring a Frisbee! *Amy Juden*