

## Gear up

A cross-section of cycling products selected and reviewed by CTC staff, specialist journalists and CTC members

If you want to submit a review, write or email the editor – details on page 80 – for advice on how to go about it. Each one printed wins a bottle of 'Cycles Gladiator' Cabernet Sauvignon from Patriarche Wines. Normally £6.99 a bottle, this Californian red is available by the case from [www.everywine.co.uk](http://www.everywine.co.uk). For more information about the Cycles Gladiator range, see [www.patriarchewines.com](http://www.patriarchewines.com)



### ⤴ Bicygnals £40

Reviewed by technical editor Chris Juden

Turn indicators are one of those cycle 'improvements' that get re-invented every few years, only to disappear without trace. Why? Well, sticking an arm out does seem to be rather effective, always works, costs nothing and is no problem for 99% of regular cyclists. A few people have genuine difficulty: those with restricted arm movement or lacking the coordination or practice to steer and brake meanwhile with the other hand. For the sake of these riders, I'm looking at Bicygnals, hoping they do the job better and stick around longer than their several over-ambitious predecessors.

As you can see from the photo, Bicygnals provide more than just turn indicators. There's a front and rear light and reflectors too. They're not bad lights either. I managed to ride home on unlit country lanes with my usual lights turned off. In town you can save power with main lights on flash mode. A nice touch is that they switch to steady whenever an indicator comes on.

So apart from pedal reflectors, and ignoring the legal technicalities of approval marks (like most people!), Bicygnals provide a complete lighting package. Perhaps that'll be enough to keep them on the market, but I doubt it. Five years ago the 'B-seen 101' also combined effective lights with radio-controlled turn indicators, but can no longer be seen even on Ebay.

Whilst over-estimating demand, the inventors invariably underestimate the ruggedness required of cycle components. Bicygnals are no exception. The electronics are clever but mechanically they're flimsy. Those red buttons you can see in front control the indicators via radio signals to the rear. But both lighting units rattled awfully on their slender plastic brackets; which with an over-sensitive switch made the right turn indicators come on at random bumps in the road. Traffic confusion reigned until I could swat the \*\*\*\* thing off!

Back at base, I dismantled the front unit and improved matters by tweaking the position of one circuit board, discovering in the process a maze of electronics totally unprotected by any seals. One ride in the rain and who knows what havoc corrosion will wreak? Indication to the rear is surely most important, yet the rear Bicygnals unit is narrower and has fewer LEDs than the front. From the middle to the outermost LED is only 9cm, so I think the ensemble is easily mistaken for just another flashing light on the bike: off colour, but not far enough off centre to indicate a turn.

**Details: [www.bicygnals.co.uk](http://www.bicygnals.co.uk) (take the bit about regulations with a pinch of salt!)**



### « Safe Turn Indicator A\$19.95 each (about £12 with p&p)

Reviewed by technical editor Chris Juden

Whereas Bicygnals is déjà vu B-Seen 101, Safe-Turn are a re-invention of wrist indicators by Michael Orłowski in Australia. With this device you still have to stick an arm out, but it makes that arm a bit more visible by means of a flashing amber gadget strapped around your wrist.

Flashing is activated by a gravity switch when the gadget is vertical. This works fine on flat handlebars, but on drops the difference in wrist orientation between steering and indicating can be rather subtle. Fortunately the switch-on angle

can be adjusted by rotating the bezel, so I was able to find a position where it would stop flashing when my hands were 'on the hoods'. To switch it off completely: simply press the bezel. Only I sometimes found it flashing in my pocket, having been pressed on again by accident.

Two Safe-Turns came for us to try, so two of us tried them, and I think we both found that they gave us a bit more confidence that our right-turn signals would be noticed. It doesn't do for a cyclist to rely entirely upon any safety aid, but this one seems harmless enough and could even be quite useful.

**Details & purchase: [www.safeturn.com](http://www.safeturn.com)**

## Froglegs cantilever brakes »

£35 for two pairs

Reviewed by technical editor Chris Juden

In the '70s touring bikes had Mafac cantilever brakes and they were good. Mountain bike cantilevers from the '80s were less good, being spongier, and worked poorly with drops. V-brakes worked even less well with drops... Fortunately, since nobody makes anything special for drop-bar touring, there's still people racing cyclo-cross, especially in Belgium, where Empella make these dead ringers of old Mafac cantilevers – complete with sticking out arms, brass bushes and bend-it-with-a-big-spanner brake block alignment.

To be honest, I'm not as keen on the latter feature, but it actually works fine and you only do it once. Neither am I fond of the tiny allen-key screws that clamp the cable. Adjustment is a fiddle, but they also work. The nut on that neat little straddle yoke needs to be tightened really hard to prevent slippage.

Note how the cable attaches to the arms at the same level as their pivots. That's what gives this brake its constant, firm and controllable power, which is the most important thing, I feel, in a brake. So for my money these are the best cantilevers currently available for drop-bar touring. (Neo-Retro from Paulcomp.com may be better – easier adjustment mainly – but are a lot more money and even less available.)

Froglegs are not at all common in the shops, but some cyclo-cross and touring specialists have them. Mine came from [on-one.co.uk](http://on-one.co.uk). If you're at all unhappy with your existing cantilever brakes, at that price I'd say it's always worth trying on a pair of Froglegs!



## « Sugoi Firewall GT Zip

£138

Reviewed by editor Dan Joyce

This jacket's name suggests it's designed to resist hack attacks by Jack Frost. It does do a pretty good job at keeping out cold and wind, and needs only a thermal base layer underneath for chilly days (around 3-6 degrees) if you're riding briskly. On freezing days you'll want a jersey too. It's heavier-weight than a windproof, being made from a breathable stretch Nylon/Lycra fabric with a windproof polyurethane laminate incorporated in the front. Rain resistance is good, though it's not a waterproof as such. The rear has two elasticated pockets, while the left arm has a pocket – big enough for a mobile phone – that's closed with a weatherproof zip. Cuffs and hem are elasticated and the collar high. Scotchlite details on the back and shoulders aid night-time visibility, but only the left arm gets a reflective strip, which better suits cyclists who ride on the right instead of the left like us. It's described as being 'fitted'. While it is tailored for cycling, I found the medium hung off me and I'd go down a size to the small. It's not a particularly cheap option for keeping at the right temperature but then neither is my usual choice of Gore Xenon gilet over a Rapha winter jersey.

**Details:** sizes S-XXL. Colours: Black/Alloy, Alloy/Black, Arrow/Black, Cobalt/Alloy. From Sugoi tel: 00 800 4321 3350, [www.sugoi.com](http://www.sugoi.com)



## BBB Aquashield Gloves »

£29.95

Reviewed by touring and commuting cyclist Michael Stenning

These gloves are designed to seal out the worst the elements can throw at them. A layer of polyurethane, branded Eurotex, protects against wet and wind-chill whilst the system of microdots ensures excellent breathability even in milder conditions.

A 40mm thermal cuff and inner liner mean an extremely close fit and weather protection without encroaching on dexterity – I could change tyres and even mount accessories wearing them. Silicone prints on the fingers ensure excellent grip even on wet leather bar tape or using muddy controls. Gel inserts offer welcome cushioning from road shock and trail buzz alike. Designed for competition use, they should see a good few season's hard use before looking tired thanks to reinforcement around crucial points. However the lack of reflective piping might limit their appeal to those regularly riding at night. Whilst easily overcome with Scotchlite strips, there are competitively priced gloves with similar specification offering this as standard.

**Details:** sizes S-XXL, from Greyville tel: 01543 251328





## « CarbOne Mini Pump

£13.95

Reviewed by Sheila Simpson, editor of Arrivé magazine

The CarbOne, from Barbieri, is billed as the first carbon fibre mini pump. Having tried various small pumps, I was sceptical as to its potential efficiency, especially as there is no clip to lock it onto the valve. But it felt feather-light (60g), looked very smart and compact at 230 x 18mm, and claimed to inflate to 142psi. So I took a chance, bought it, and was highly impressed. The pump fits easily and snugly onto a presta valve, feels comfortable, and the pumping action is exceptionally smooth and easy. After a couple of trials I ditched my heavy old frame pump and slipped the CarbOne into the top bag for Paris-Brest-Paris, where I had to use it for a puncture in the dark – no problem. Sceptics will point out that inflating from flat with a mini pump is time-consuming, and a

even passed as cabin luggage on a flight to Cyprus. Note that for a choice of presta or schrader valves you need the slightly larger CarbTwo (99g, 230mm).

Details: from Decathlon, [www.decathlon.co.uk](http://www.decathlon.co.uk)

## Ground Effect Baked Beanie »

£7 plus £3 p&p

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

Winter warmers don't get much cosier than this microfleece beanie. Weighing next to nothing, it can be worn snugly under a helmet or on its lonesome. Yet despite the thin fleece material, it makes a surprising difference on a chilly day, scooping down over the ears to keep the whole head warm without muffling sound too much. While I've been touring in mountainous SW China, it's come to the rescue on many an icy-cold, snowy descent, packing down small enough to be stashed in my jersey pocket on those long Himalayan climbs. Back at home, the big reflective patch comes in handy for wintry commutes. As usual from this Kiwi outfit, price is low and quality is good – and don't worry about being stung by the taxman, as import duties are prepaid too. It's a one-size-fits-all number, with enough give in the material to fit both little and big baked bean heads alike.

Contact: colours: silver, titanium grey, or burnt orange, from [www.groundeffect.co.nz](http://www.groundeffect.co.nz)



## « Axiom Journey disc compatible rack

£24.95

Reviewed by touring and commuting cyclist Michael Stenning



Made from neatly-welded 10.2mm 6061 aluminium rod and with a claimed max payload of 25 kilos (55lb) this rack is designed to solve compatibility hassles on disc-braked bikes. The right side is fully rigid, fitting conventionally to the rack eyelet, whereas the left is telescopic, allowing a custom fit at the disc mount tab. Heavier gauge tubing improves rigidity, eliminating annoying bag sway when heavily laden. The top platform is fine for rack bags but too narrow to double as an effective splash guard. The satin black finish seems generally hardy, although I would bind electrical tape around the major contact points to prevent panniers wearing the paint. Equally, a lifetime warranty and 870g all-up weight is reassuring but is of little consolation should disaster strike mid-tour. Budget cro-moly racks are more easily repaired in the field and might be a better bet for wilderness riding. However, this is a keenly priced carrier that address a growing need.

Info: [windwave: www.windwave.co.uk](http://windwave.com) (test model supplied by [www.edinburghbicycle.com](http://www.edinburghbicycle.com))

## Corinne Dennis Cotton/Lycra Ladies Shorts »

£39.99

Reviewed by Sheila Simpson, editor of Arrivé magazine

I do not usually wear padded shorts but noticed that, as one grows older, the natural padding on the base of one's pelvic bones becomes thinner. So I tried a pair of Corinne Dennis cycling shorts on a 600km event last year and they were so comfortable that I used them throughout the Paris-Brest-Paris in August – that is for several days, without taking them off. They have a thin insert of soft polyester fleece-faced fabric in the crotch, which moulds to the rider's shape without creasing and is completely unobtrusive when used in conjunction with a Trans Am saddle – the sort with the hole in the middle. On a traditional saddle, I am aware of a padded feeling around the genital area. The cotton/lycra is matt, more flattering than plain lycra, whilst stretching in all directions. The waistband is comfortably wide and lower leg cuffs prevent the fabric from riding up. They are easy wash, and dry quickly, which is unusual for shorts with padding. I continue to wear normal sports clothes for shopping and cycling holidays but for long events these are now my choice.

Details: black or navy, from [www.corinnedennis.co.uk](http://www.corinnedennis.co.uk)



## **MSR Packtowl Ultralite Medium »**

**£12.99**

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

I've never been a fan of travel towels in the past: they're not particularly small and just seem to move water around. MSR's ultralight microfibre Packtowl is a different breed altogether. For a start, it really is compact, taking up less space than a pack of cards, and for all intents and purposes, it weighs nothing.

Yet when it comes to drying, it soaks up water like a sponge. It's not until ringing it out, which you'll need to do several times, that you realise how effective it is. In fact, it can be rung almost dry, though the supplied mesh-backed case ensures it airs out if stored a little damp, and a pop button is useful for attaching it to a line without it blowing away. Easy to scrub clean with a bar of soap, it's still soft to touch after several months on tour. The Medium Ultralite can't claim to match a hotel's fluffy towel, nor will its diminutive size (30x65cm) protect your modesty. But as a way to dry off before spending a night in a tent or hostel bed, it's hard to beat. No matter how ultralight you travel, there's no reason not to have one in your panniers or saddlebag.

**Details: weighs 30g. Sizes available: S, M, L, XL (£4.55-£19.99). From First Ascent tel: 01929 580 484, [www.firstascent.co.uk](http://www.firstascent.co.uk)**



## **« Pulsafe glasses**

**£3.49**

Reviewed by cycling photographer Jason Patient

For total unobscured vision I prefer glasses with no visible frames and for dull days a cheery yellow lens. The 'Pulsafe' single moulding polycarbonate model is just that. The design structure thickens to effectively form the frame. Optically they are as clear and distortion-free as any other 'famous name' brand. The shape and contemporary styling is very smart, considering they are sold as industrial safety equipment. I've used these for months and apart from a few rough-handling minor scratches they remain as good as new. Being a commercial protective spectacle they meet necessary safety standards for high impact collisions and UV filtration, and at £3.50 they really are superb value. Request a Screwfix catalogue to see the extensive range of glasses on offer.

**Details: available in clear, darkened tint and amber (yellow). See [www.screwfix.com](http://www.screwfix.com), freephone 0500 414141.**



## **Travels with Lucy, by Chris Buerki »**

**£11.99 inc p&p**

Reviewed by CTC touring officer Mark Waters

'3600 miles, 19 flat tires (sic), seven puppies and four near-death experiences' is the strapline to this unusual cycling travelogue. Lucy, of course, is a dog, and a very lucky one indeed, as you'll find out when you read the book. This is no ordinary travelogue and the author is no cycle tourist, which makes the book all the more interesting. As Chris travels through the southern states of the USA, finally reaching the Pacific Ocean to head north through California, numerous travellers' tales of the road unravel in his unique style of writing. Since the book is privately published, arrangements have been made to sell it through CTC.

**Details: cheques only, made out to CTC, to CTC (Travels with Lucy), Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford GU2 9JX.**

