

Gear up!

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

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ISLABIKES SHORT-SLEEVED JERSEY & BIB SHORTS £24.99 & £26.99

Reviewed by cycling journalist Guy Kesteven (and daughters)

Islabikes have been making beautifully proportioned and designed kids' bikes for several years. Now they've introduced a range of kids' clothing.

Like the Isla road bikes, the jerseys have only a vibrant bright red colour option but it's great for visibility without straying into low street-cred neon. They come in four different sizes – ages 4/5, 6/7, 8/9 and 10/11 – and, unlike most leisure cut kids' clothes, the shirt is a close fit without being too tight. Generous length, with a silicon gripper on the hem to keep it in place, and a chunky zip that's easy for small hands to use all help comfort. The only things that look out of proportion are the tall pockets, but they're more secure for energy bars, bottles and other cargo.

Bibs for kids are really rare, but are perfect for avoiding infant builder's bum: small kids don't have much of a waist to keep shorts up, so their shorts otherwise need a very tight waistband. They're available in sizes 6/7, 8/9 and 10/11. The segmented unisex pad fits snugly without a baggy nappy feel, and makes a big difference on longer rides.

All the kit washes well, which is vital for kids' clobber, and the breathable fabric meant our testers were happy wearing them all day long. The range also includes a softshell jacket, longs, and arm and leg warmers, all with the same impressive attention to detail and comfort enhancement that we reckon is well worth paying a bit more for.

From: www.islabikes.co.uk

SLIME SKABS £4.99

Reviewed by CTC member Nigel Bell

Slime's puncture repair kit weighs only 10g and comes in a neat little plastic case that is 10mm thick and roughly half the size of a credit card. Inside, there are six self-adhesive patches, instructions and a metal scuffer. In use, it's a simple matter of partially inflating the tube, cleaning the surface, peeling off a patch and sticking it down. Plagued by thorns on a recent off-road trip we used about half a dozen Skabs without problem. With an online price of around £3 they may not be the cheapest option, but they're quick and easy to use.

From: various online retailers



EARTH DNA PACK £49

Reviewed by CTC Cycling Development Director Rob Fuller



The Healthy Back Bag Company claims that the asymmetric design of its bags helps to reduce stress on the wearer's back. I didn't test this medium-sized Earth DNA pack very heavily loaded, but it was certainly very comfortable when both walking and cycling and the gel studded shoulder strap significantly reduced slippage – a common problem with single-strap bags. It has ten useful pockets and comes in three sizes; the medium is 45.5x30x16.5cm. It's made from recycled plastic bottles.

From: thehealthybackbag.co.uk

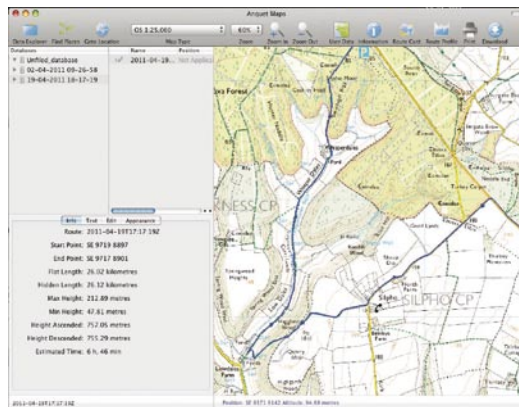
ANQUET FOR MAC FREE DOWNLOAD

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

These days there's a good choice of digital mapping programs – unless you use an Apple Mac, in which case you can choose from Google Earth (earth.google.co.uk, free), RouteBuddy (routebuddy.com, £70), and now Anquet, which has been ported over from the PC version.

To begin with I found it useless: it wouldn't even import GPX tracklogs. That's been fixed by updates (I'm now using version 1.07, though the latest is 1.09) but it still seems somewhat unintuitive and un-Mac-like. Perhaps all digital mapping is like this? It doesn't seem especially stable either: version 1.08 often crashed on start up and 1.07 occasionally does.

With perseverance and reference to the Help file, the program does get easier to use and you can readily import, export, manually create, and print routes. One benefit over other mapping programs is that you can chop sections out of complete routes and save them separately, recombining them into other routes



as required; each route need not be a discrete unit.

Mapping costs are much cheaper than the paper versions: the whole of Wales at 1:50k is £23.18. However, you'll have to buy again any mapping that you have for the PC version. Anquet is available for the iPhone too (£19.99) and you can move data between that and your desktop.

System requirements for the Mac versions are OS X 10.5.6 and above and 1Gb or more of memory. Since the program is free, there's no reason not to try it. Despite some niggles, I have found it really useful for planning group rides. Hopefully it will continue to improve and become more stable.

From: anquet.co.uk

POLARIS BOJO SHOES £64.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

For transport cycling or touring, mountain bike shoes with recessed cleats are much better than raised-cleat road shoes because you can walk as well as ride in them. Some are overtly sporty and look odd with casual clothes; these Bojo ones are meant for urban use and look much like trainers.

Fastening is by laces instead of Velcro straps. There's no auxiliary strap over the laces either, which looks unobtrusive but requires careful knotting to keep laces off a bare chain – especially if it's part of a fixed-



wheel drivetrain.

The upper is synthetic suede, with perforations for ventilation. In summer they're comfortable; in winter you'd want more protection from the elements. The toe box isn't too tight. The heel cup is reinforced with stiff PVC to stop it losing its shape, and there's a reflective strip there to show up in headlights. There's only a little flex in the grippy-treaded sole. That's good for pedalling efficiency but makes walking a bit clumpy. High street, fine; hiking, no.

The price is fair, although Specialized Primo shoes are £15 cheaper. I like Specialized footbeds, so I'd pick those first. Sizes: 40-47, weight 470g per shoe (inc cleat).

From: polaris-apparel.co.uk

PANARACER CG XC 29x2.25" TYRE

£42.99 EACH

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

This new-for-2011 Cedric Gracia 'signature' tyre is for cross-country riding, which isn't what downhill and four-cross rider Gracia is known for. But he says he rides a 29er a lot, and distributor Zyro says this tyre 'rolls like no other' and 'won't let you down in the corners'. It's not a semi-slick: it has traditional chunky tread blocks combined with a kind of raised rolling strip in the centre (inspired by a touring tyre, perhaps?!), formed from elongated versions of Gracia's initials. It is a good compromise, particularly in rainy Britain where faster-rolling tyres flounder for much of the year. But it is still a compromise: lighter, less heavily treaded tyres like Schwalbe's Racing Ralph and Kenda's Small Block Eight feel faster, while both Schwalbe's Nobby Nic and Panaracer's own Rampage feel more secure in the mud. I've gone back to using a Nobby Nic on the front and – probably until autumn – a Kenda Karma on the back. But if you want a more heavy-duty tyre for year-round UK use, these CG XCs are a good do-it-all choice. Weight:

890g, size 57-622. There's also a 26x2.1 version for £3 less.

From: zyro.co.uk



ALTURA SEMI DRY 3/4 BAGGY SHORTS £59.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

'Semi dry' doesn't mean showerproof but rather waterproof in places: from the waist to the back of the knee, the rear of these baggy shorts will shrug off wheelspray. That's where you get soggiest when mountain biking, so it's a nice feature. The waterproof panels haven't added bulk or stiffness, and these shorts are light and airy enough for hot summer rides as well as winter ones.

There's no inner short so these are most comfortable when worn over Lycra shorts. The elasticated waist is adjustable with Velcro straps and securely fastened with two press-studs and a zipped fly. There are two zipped pockets, and the legs have Velcro straps to stop them flapping. While I prefer the cut of Endura's Singletrack ¾ shorts, these are lighter and don't get as soggy. Sizes: XS-XXL, men's only.

From: zyro.co.uk



Cycle shorts

The Man Who Cycled the Americas

£13.99

Reviewed by Gavin Wood

Mark Beaumont recounts the story of his journey from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego on the southernmost tip of South America, punctuating his adventure by climbing the highest peaks in both North and South America. This book is both interesting and entertaining and Beaumont provides us with an easy-to-read account of the many countries and characters he encountered. It is a well-written story that will appeal to anyone who enjoys tales of derring do and real life adventure.

ISBN 978-0593066980

Veatable bars

£0.99

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

Available in 'three great flavours' – That Sweetcorn, Tomato Pizza and Sweet Roast Vegetable – these gluten- and wheat-free savoury vegetarian snack bars are made from cooked, blended and compressed vegetables. Apart from a lack of calories – only 99kcal for a 45g bar versus a Frusli bar's 250 – their carbohydrate-heavy composition is good fuel for cycling. But only if you can gag them down. I couldn't. I'd rather get hunger knock. Yuck.

www.veatable.co.uk

BBB Intergrip 130mm

£7.95

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

These flared grips offer more support to the heel of your hand, like the more expensive Ergo grips they imitate. They're also available in a shorter version (92mm) for bikes with twistgrip shifters, and with medium and long integral bar ends. Compared to Ergon grips, these feel more plasticky. But the shape is still supportive, making them a good choice among budget grips.

www.windwave.co.uk

CYCLIST'S BRITAIN IN A BOX £12.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

This ride guide isn't a book: it's 50 laminated cards, measuring 15×10.5cm. Many of them unfold to two or three sheets. The mapping is mostly 1:250k, with segments of 1:50k for off-road sections. Instructions are terse, but you're also given a thumbnail sketch of how to get there, where to stay, and any points of interest.

The routes are scattered around Britain and are mostly do-able in a day or weekend.

It's a pleasingly tactile and portable format, but the content lacks the depth of regional guides and the breadth of UK-wide books (The Good Mountain Biking Guide has 700 routes) or websites (like ctc-maps.org.uk).

From: kylecathie.co.uk

