

GEAR UP

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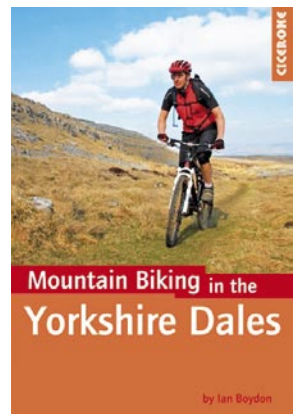


MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES

£14.95

Review by CTC MTB Leader Trainer Sam Cook

This book features 30 rides, rated for technical difficulty (medium, hard, very hard) and also distance, ascent, time, and percentage of off-road riding. Each route is illustrated with a clear, highlighted 1:50k OS map and an easy-to-understand written description. Given clear visibility, you could navigate using only this pocket-sized book. The introduction gives very good advice about mountain biking in the more 'wild' environment. I particularly like 'The Dirty Dozen' of best descents in the Yorkshire Dales. Highly recommended. Published by Cicerone (cicerone.co.uk) ISBN 9781852846763



GEMINI XERA LIGHT (4-CELL)

£149.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

These days you can get really powerful headlights cheaply online. But I've witnessed clubmates with cheap lights that have had poor connections or batteries that don't recharge well, so bargain hunting can be a lottery. This 850-lumen Gemini Xera LED light is well-made and versatile, and the price is still reasonable. The little (52g) headlight is separate from the 250g battery, which isn't as neat as cable-less designs but makes it especially suitable as a helmet light – or just a head-light, as it comes with a head-torch-style strap. The beam is 16 degrees wide, mid-way between a narrow spot and a flood, so the lamp also works fine on the handlebar by itself.

There are four modes: high, medium, low and flash, with burn times of 4, 8, 12 and 16 hours respectively with this 4-cell battery. Charge remaining is shown by the illuminated on/mode button. The Xera is also available with a 2-cell battery for £20 less and half the burn times. Either comes with a smart charger, plus a long length of cable so that you can stow the battery in a pocket or bag rather than strapping it to the top tube or the back of a helmet.

There's no sideways light other than the main beam or no 'cut off' at the top, so you'll need

to use it on road with care to avoid dazzling drivers – and you may want to add a 'to be seen by' front light. Off-road the beam is an excellent compromise: powerful and broad enough for use by itself and even better as a helmet light with a flood on the handlebar. It's weatherproof and seems pretty rugged too.

i-ride.co.uk



GARMIN ETREX 30

£209.99 (maps & bar mount extra)

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

When members ask which GPS unit to get for touring I always recommend a Garmin Etrex: Garmin because there's the best choice of compatible maps, of any part of the world, free or cheap online (so you don't need OS); and Etrex rather than an 'Edge' for several reasons.

Provided you don't need a virtual training partner or lap times, an Etrex 30 does all the same bike computer and navigation functions – and more. It's powered by AA batteries: rechargeable or consumable, so a spare pair ensures you won't run out. As it's designed for hiking and sailing as well as cycling, it has a higher IPX rating, so it's more likely to withstand rain and vibration. Its screen is just as bright and a similar size (35×44mm) but isn't touch-sensitive. However, I think buttons are a better option when cycling.

So: Etrex 20 or 30? The latter has a barometric altimeter, otherwise they're much the same. Compared to the old Etrex, these both have a clearer, brighter and more versatile map display, plus improved usability.

Battery life: 24 hours from alkaline or 2.5Ah NiMH.
Weight: 142g, including batteries. garmin.com



SCHWALBE SNOW STUD TYRE

£38.99

Reviewed by CTC member Dominic Berry

After a couple of falls on ice when commuting to work in Scotland, I bought a pair of 26×1.9in Snow Studs. The idea is that in normal conditions, the tyres are pumped up hard, and the studs only come into contact with the road as the bike leans in turns. In poor road conditions, the pressure is reduced to bring the studs into contact with the road surface and increase the tread in contact with the road. Schwalbe recommend a minimum pressure of 20psi.

In fresh snow, the grip is good, the tread clears the snow easily and the tyres maintain good directional

stability. The studs provide grip if there is ice on the road surface beneath. They will even provide some traction on slick, wet ice and black ice if tyre pressure is run very low indeed. Mine slipped twice in two years on slick ice, although the studs prevented the tyre from rapidly breaking traction and allowed 'controlled ditching'.

After two years of winter use, there has been no visible wear on the studs, and none have been lost. They're thoroughly recommended. (Editor's note: Snow Studs are available from retailers but are no longer made. The replacement is the Winter, available in 26×1.75in, 700×30C, 700×35C and 700×40C.)

schwalbe.co.uk



KURT KINETIC MAGNETIC TURBO TRAINER

£240

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Turbo trainers are joyless exercise machines associated with racers. They're also useful for non-competitive cyclists who don't want to relinquish their fitness when forced off the bike by weather, lack of daylight, or injury. This Kurt Kinetic trainer is the usual A-frame design. The tyre-driven roller is adjustable for wheels ranging from 20in to 700C. Variable magnetic resistance is adjustable with an indexed bar lever.

It's sturdily built and stable, the wide roller and big flywheel turning smoothly. The resistance settings are low compared with the similarly-priced Tacx Satori High Power I use; it's fine for aerobic work, not so good for power. It's not as quick to get a bike on and off either, as it lacks a cam-lever. It's not bad but unless you'll be using a bike with small wheels, I'd recommend the Satori – or something cheaper. 2pure.co.uk

RIVET PEARL SADDLE

£99

Reviewed by Cycling Development Officer Ross Adams

The Pearl is aimed more at the long distance rider than the racer, rather like the similarly-priced Brooks Swift. It provides a slightly wider contact area than the other saddle in the Rivet range, the sportier Diablo, but still doesn't restrict hip movement at any point during the pedal stroke.

The design, construction and material is excellent, using high-grade leather that is waterproofed

during the tanning process, providing a strong yet flexible perch. The ergonomic slot down the centre of the saddle allows some airflow and will also prevent the leather from flaring out at the sides over time.

At 600 grams, this cromoly-railed version felt quite weighty; a titanium version is available at £190, weighing in at 460 grams. As with any leather saddle, fit and comfort will improve further with time spent on it. carradice.co.uk



BROOKS HANDLEBAR TAPE

£44.68

Reviewed by CTC Senior Marketing Officer David Dowling

Brooks leather saddles are the epitome of retro chic and the perch of choice for thousands of tourers. But what about their bar tape? It's not the flawless product you might expect for £45: the tape absorbs rain and the leather provides minimal cushioning. Buy and fit some gel pads before winding on the bar tape. Take care with the branded bar-end corks; they fall out relatively easily. Aside from these grips, the tape looks great (especially if you choose it in a colour to match your saddle!) and offers a reliable grip that doesn't become tacky or clammy. And unlike non-leather bar tape, it's very durable indeed. brooksendland.com



M-WAVE WATERPROOF PANNIERS, SMALL

£44.96

Reviewed by Cycling Dvpt. Officer Seamus Kelly

I've used these M-Wave Waterproof panniers on my daily, soggy commute in Manchester. The bags have a capacity of 12.5 litres each. They attach to the bike with Rixen & Kaul quick-release fixings and are 100% waterproof. Reflective chevrons and light loops help to get you noticed in the dark and removable pockets inside keep small items together.

Through hours of driving rain, freezing fog and heavy sleet the only things that stayed dry were inside these panniers. While they stayed on firmly even on my cobbled commute, the ratchet on one of the Rixen & Kaul fixings broke – just bad luck, I guess. When the bags were really full I found that the roll-tops could do with a bit more length making them easier to close.

Even at the RRP of £59.95 they are good value and are better featured than my similarly priced Outer Edge waterproof panniers. cyclestuffdirect.com

CTC PERFORMANCE WINTER TRAINING JACKET

£108

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

This softshell jacket is made of a polyester fabric called Thermocore, which has a fleecy inner face and a windproof outer. In temperatures of 2-9 degrees, I wore only a base-layer underneath and never got cold – though was sometimes hot. It's not waterproof as such but still insulates when wet.

There are three jersey-style pockets in the back, plus a (vertically!) zipped one for valuables. There's some reflective piping, and the white panels and yellow details help daytime visibility.

It's bulky to carry so it's not a just-in-case layer. But in miserable weather, it will keep you cosy on club rides, on road or off. Sizes: men's XS-XXXL, women's 6-18. impsport.com – search for 'CTC'

