

GEAR UP

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LOST LANES

£14.99

*Reviewed by CTC Development
Director Rob Fuller*
Subtitled '36 Glorious Bike Rides in Southern England', this wonderful new book from Jack Thurston is exactly that. What sets this book apart is the author's sheer joy of cycling, which shines through. Each description is filled with fascinating insights into the local history, geology, ecology and people, and is accompanied by stunning photography and artwork. There are easy rides, hard rides, day rides, city rides and suggestions for families, wild campers, foodies and pub lovers. Best of all, every ride is accessible by train. Even for locals, this book guarantees new perspectives and reminds you why you fell in love with cycling in the first place. ISBN 9780957157316. thebikeshow.net



PROTECT A CYCLE PRO

£999 INC DELIVERY

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Trimetals make a range of similar-looking galvanised steel bike stores: the Trimetals Bike Store (£469), the Protect a Cycle (£589), and this, the Protect a Cycle Pro. All have an up-and-over folding door and will take two bikes easily or three with careful stacking. The Pro is a bit wider. The main difference is security.

The Bike Store has just a couple of padlock points at the sides. These could be sawed through – and might be if you put one in a London front yard. But I've used three Bike Stores for a decade without incident. They're not in a vulnerable area and they hold inexpensive utility bikes. I'd recommend the optional front hasps (£46).

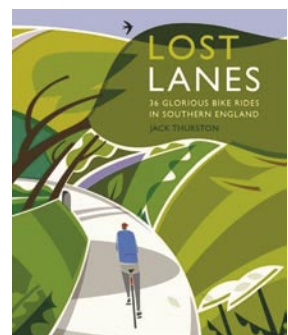
The Protect a Cycle has these hasps and locks by default, while the Pro also has thicker panels and about £200 worth of extra security: two silver-rated shackles, a ground anchor, a 12mm-thick chain, and a gold-rated shackle. Trimetals state that it is 'the first and only secure bicycle store that has achieved the Secured by Design mark – the Police Preferred Specification'.



Like the other bike stores, the Pro arrives flat-packed. You need about 2x1 metres of level hardstanding to bolt it to. (These bolts, like all the others, are inaccessible to a thief outside.) Internal dimensions are: height 129/109cm (back/front), width 194cm, depth 84cm. There's a deep lip at the front that you have to lift the bikes over, which might be an issue for heavy (electric?) bikes.

The store won't rot like a wooden shed, and any bikes inside stay dry; it (and the non-Pro Protect a Cycle) even has a metal floor. It requires less space than a shed too due to the up-and-over door. The Pro's door lifts up by gas struts rather than springs.

There are just two downsides. It's a shame there isn't one master key for all three locks to save time. And the Pro is expensive – £400 more than the non-Pro and twice the price of an Asgard three-bike store (asgardsss.co.uk). Then again, if you'll store more than £999 worth of bikes inside, the Protect a Cycle Pro could soon pay for itself in high-risk areas. Recommended. protectacycle.co.uk/pac-pro.php



ANTLER ULTIMATE COMMUTER BACKPACK

£85

Reviewed by CTC Volunteer Support Officer Mark Slater

The Antler Ultimate Commuter Backpack enables you to carry a suit crease-free on your bike. I thought it might catch the wind due to its size (60×60×10cm), but the shoulder and waist straps can be adjusted to fit it snugly to your back. One of the shoulder straps has a pocket for a mobile phone, and there are several more in the main bag, one of which is just the right size for a laptop.

Capacity is 36 litres. Inside there's a coat hanger, secured by an internal catch, a padded loop for crease-free packing, and two zipped compartments for shoes and toiletries. Zips run the full length of the backpack, enabling it to fold out for easy packing. The pack is water resistant and the zips are waterproof. There's a fluorescent waterproof cover for the worst weather. A reflective strip under the zip adds nighttime visibility. antler.co.uk



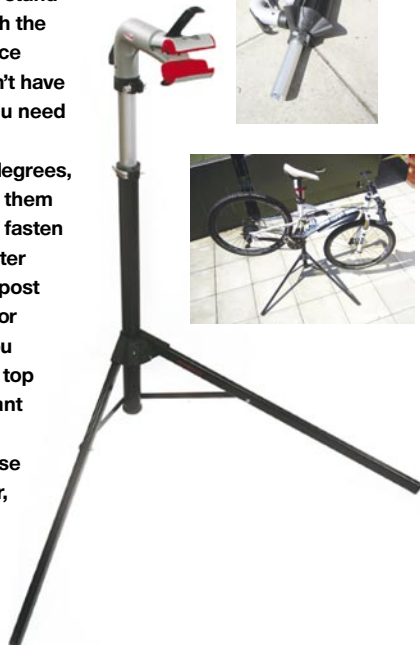
CYCLO MODULAR WORKSTATION STAND

£200

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

It's called a modular workstation because the quick-release clamp head (£95 by itself) can be fitted to a wall mount, a bench mount, a bolt-down floor stand or – as here – a folding stand (£110 by itself). It takes seconds to detach the clamp head and collapse the stand, or vice versa. So it's a practical option if you don't have the space to leave a stand in situ, or if you need to take the stand to an event.

The clamp head rotates through 360 degrees, and the jaws are well-padded. You press them together, then use the large cam-lever to fasten the jaws tight. I found this easiest on lighter weight bikes with a good amount of seatpost showing (round or aero). The rear wheel or seatstay can obstruct the cam-lever if you clamp the seat tube, while the down and top tubes may carry cables that you don't want to clamp. As a home workshop stand, I didn't find it any more useful or easy to use than Park Tools' PCS-9 (£99.99). However, the Cyclo stand is more versatile and much more portable. weldtite.co.uk



CTC PERFORMANCE BIBSHORTS

£62.40

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

A good fit and a comfortable seat pad are the two most important elements in a pair of bibshorts. These CTC bibshorts from Impsport have both. The lightweight fabric-and-foam pad ('TMF MicroXfine') probably best suits riders who perch on the saddle rather than plonking all their weight on it. While it lacks the sit bone support of a gel pad – or just a thick pad – it contours to your body better, doesn't feel bulky when pedalling rapidly, and stays comfortable when you're sweating. The legs have broad, silicone-dotted grippers and don't ride up, which prevents the shorts bunching and chafing. The shoulder straps are wide mesh ones that don't dig in – not even if you've got a metal plate in one collarbone! In terms of overall comfort, there's not that much to choose between these and a pair of Skins Pro Compression bib shorts I've got that have an RRP of £132. And 10% of the price of these Impsport ones goes to support CTC. They're machine washable at 40 degrees. Sizes: XS-XXXL, ladies 6-18. impsport.com



FENWICK'S STEALTH ROAD BIKE KIT

£31.99

Reviewed by Ian Warby, CTC Senior Support Officer for MTB Development

This kit comes with everything you need to clean and lubricate your bike, including an 11-litre bucket. That's more than enough water to get the job done. You then have a sponge and a litre of bike cleaner to get down to business. The kit also includes a litre of concentrated bike cleaner for you to mix more.

The chain cleaner is great. Its foaming action makes this degreaser much easier to work

with than others I've used. The chain cleaning 'sponge' works well too, much better than oily rags or clunky clip-on chain cleaners.

The Stealth Chain Lube lends its name to the kit, and is for me the highlight. You apply a drop of lube to each link via a pipette. You then leave the lube to air dry and it forms a silky film over the chain. Afterwards, my chain was quieter and ran smoothly through the gears with a noticeable improvement in gear change quality and speed. zyro.co.uk



RHINE CYCLE ROUTE

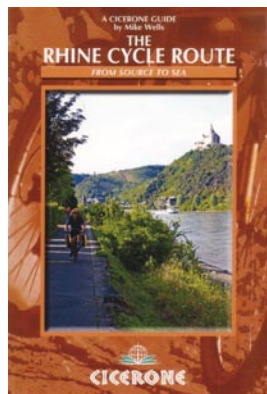
£14.95

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

Second only to the Danube amongst the great rivers of Western Europe, the Rhine is more spectacular, springing from its highest mountains, traversing the

second largest lake, most powerful waterfall and greatest gorge, entering the North Sea at Europe's biggest port. Set your wheels on the well-surfaced paths and quiet roads along its banks and you enter cycle-touring heaven.

With the help of this guide you could go from source to sea in a fortnight, but I'd recommend taking longer to savour the sights, sounds and flavours of this varied valley. You may want some maps, but the way is well enough signed that you could probably do without. ISBN 9781852846916. cicerone.co.uk



SPLASHMAPS

£18.99 or £24.99 (Dartmoor)

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

Cloth used to be glued to the back of paper maps to stop them disintegrating when wet. Splashmaps are all cloth – and they're waterproof and washable too!

I took their Eastern Peak District map out for a ride. It looks a bit like Landranger and does use some OS data, combined with Open-Street-Map and Local Authority rights-of-way information. So it's good and accurate.

The printing is great for cloth but not as sharp as paper, so the scale is blown up to 1:40,000 (about 1.5 miles to the inch). And the colours are a bit samey. It's hard to distinguish woods from towns, rough from tarmac country lanes. The publishers have tried too hard to show the byzantine complexity of English rights of way!

It's nevertheless a useful map for sharp-eyed readers – and so versatile. Write on it with a chart pen; it washes off. Screw it into a pocket; it will not crease. Use it as a picnic cloth, a damp chair cover, you can even wear it. It has so many uses I'd take one with me as well as a GPS. (GPS is like reading maps through a keyhole!)

All our national parks are covered in 27km squares, with Dartmoor in one 41km square. Others are due and custom maps are available. splashmaps.net, 07876 390656

VISIJAX HI-VIS JACKET

£149.99 RRP

Reviewed by CTC Councillor Tim Jackson

The main selling point of this jacket is the built-in LED lighting front and rear, and the flashers on each arm. When I got the jacket, they worked well and were dazzling! Within a month, they failed completely and the battery box got too hot to touch. I went through two replacement boxes and a new jacket. All failed.

The jacket itself is fine. It's hi-vis and the fit and features good. The electrics are a disappointment. It's a good idea that just didn't work – yet there is surely a market for one that does! Price is nominal. It's only sold via Amazon – for £98. Sizes XS-XL. visijax.com

