

GEAR UP

Components, kit, and accessories reviewed by specialist journalists, CTC staff – and you.

This issue: new shifters, luggage, and books

REVIEW
OF THE
MONTH



Gevenalle
GEVENALLE
GX LEVERS
\$219 PLUS \$20 P&P
gevenalle.com

DUAL-CONTROL DROP handlebar brake levers, or 'brifters', have made derailleur gear shifting – and therefore road bikes – accessible to every cyclist. However, they are vulnerable to dirt and damage, expensive to replace, and only properly compatible with specific gearing systems, all of which Gevenalle offer as potential reasons to fit their shifter system instead.

Originally marketed under the Retrosift label, it comprises a pair of machined aluminium brackets with integral outer cable stops, each one attached to the front of a brake lever and fitted with a bar-end shift lever. The latest model, the GX, features a bracket with a re-aligned cable route and brake levers suitable for either linear-pull brakes or conventional short-pull caliper or cantilever brakes.

The Gevenalle system is primarily aimed at cyclocross riders. The GX model may also interest touring cyclists

since its right-hand shifter works with the new generation Shimano Dyna-sys and Shadow+ 10-speed mountain bike rear mechs and, therefore, accesses the low gearing possibilities of MTB cassettes. I matched the shifters with a Deore mech and HG-X 11-34 cassette. On the test cycle, 34/34 gearing gives a bottom gear of 26in.

Re-branded Tektros, the Gevenalle brake levers work well with Shimano XT trekking linear brake arms and provide powerful, controllable braking from either drop handlebar hand position. An alternative inner wire nipple housing enables the levers to be used with short-pull brakes, although this requires additional spannering.

The additional cable pull needed to operate a compatible MTB rear mech is provided by a new MicroShift indexed

- PROS**
- + MTB derailleurs with drops
 - + Linear-pull or standard-pull brakes
- CONS**
- Ergonomics could be better

bar-end shifter model, which can also be used in friction mode with non-compatible mechs. Shifting is as expected of indexed bar-cons; the front mech can be trimmed to perfection and the rear offers near-instant changes across a number of gears.

On the minus side, reaching the levers requires a stretch on a well set-up machine. The hand movement is quickly learned but not entirely natural and is awkward – but not impossible – when holding the drops. Pressing down on the left-hand lever can actuate the relevant brake. This may not be a problem on levers fitted to Midge-style bars. My major reservation is simple: the bar-end controls on which the Gevenalle system is based are neater overall and easier to use from their intended position, especially when holding the drops. Otherwise, this is a versatile and useful gear shifting option. You can order a pair directly from the website; \$239 is about £155 at present.

Richard Hallett



SUBMIT A REVIEW

To submit a review, write or email the editor – details on page 3 – for advice. Each one printed wins a personalised SplashMaps map worth £28.99. For more about SplashMaps' weatherproof, washable, wearable maps, visit splash-maps.com





Steven Primrose-Smith
NO PLACE LIKE HOME, THANK GOD

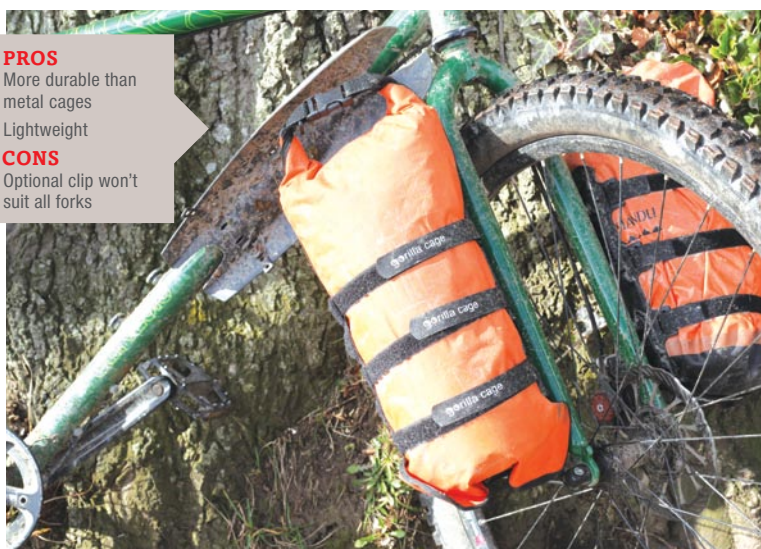
£9.99
 unicycle50.com

THERE ARE MANY BOOKS about cycle touring but few are as entertaining, informative and engaging as this one. Despite a near-fatal illness, Steven embarked on a series of journeys, with the aim of visiting as many capital cities as possible across Europe – and seeing if there is anywhere as bad as his home town of Blackburn. He also threw in the added challenges of continuing his Open University studies on the road and trying out as many strange foods as possible. The result is a funny and informative account of his travels to some of the Continent's well-known and more undiscovered corners. The writing is excellent but sadly there are no photos or a map to enliven the text. However, Steven's website, UniCycle50.com, has some stunning imagery of the trip plus more information and route guides to each of the 53 countries he visited during his ride. The book is also available in Kindle format.



Julie Rand

- PROS**
- + More durable than metal cages
 - + Lightweight
- CONS**
- Optional clip won't suit all forks



Free Parable
GORILLA CAGE

£19.95
 cyclemiles.co.uk

THE GORILLA CAGE is a super-sized version of the Monkii, the detachable Velcro-and-Nylon bottle cage that's a more secure and adaptable alternative to a standard bottle cage. It mounts to the triple fork eyelets appearing on an increasing number of adventure-oriented MTBs and touring bikes, or to a two-eyelet bottle mount. For bikes that lack the necessary

braze-ons there's an optional mounting clip (£10.50). The Gorilla, which weighs 70g, is rated up to 1.5kg and works best with light but bulky items stuffed into a drybag. I've used a pair on my Genesis Fortitude MTB to carry a winter sleeping bag, a bivvy bag, a tarp and a sleeping mat. Weight is kept low to the ground so the effect on handling is minimal, and everything was held securely. Designed primarily for weight-conscious bikepackers, the Gorilla would also work well on the long stem of a Brompton or other small-wheeled folders.

Jack Thurston

PDW
TAKEOUT BASKET

£70
 paligap.cc

This basket is sturdily made, relatively light, and looks good. I wanted to like it. But I found that any real weight in the basket – a D-lock in the dedicated front slot, for example – made it tilt downwards onto the front tyre. I couldn't fit it to a bike with North Road style handlebars either, although it did fit between the drops on my racer. At 155×255×105mm internally, it's fairly small; the bag that sits inside it is about the size of a bar bag. PDW suggest you can use it to carry 'six bottles of beer and some burritos' but I struggled to find a use for it. In the end, I packed tools, a spare innertube, and a waterproof jacket. My saddlebag holds more than that without making the steering a drag. I couldn't see how to attach my front light to it so used a head torch instead. Overall, the Takeout is okay for a short distance commute, and might be handy to dump a handbag into, but a saddlebag or bar bag will do as much and more.

Sam Jones



- PROS**
- + Sturdily built
- CONS**
- Can droop
 - Relatively small capacity



Café du Cycliste
LUCIENNE JERSEY

€130
cafeducycliste.com

CAFÉ DU CYCLISTE in Nice design and sell niche cycling wear, a bit like a French Rapha. The Lucienne is a race-fit, lightweight summer road jersey with mesh back and pit panels and a full zip to keep you cool. The fabric (20% Merino wool) is noticeably softer than the norm and is a pleasure to wear, somehow cooling in daytime heat yet warm when temperatures fall. The three

rear pockets sit snugly, with internal elastic keeping contents safe. There's a pump loop and a zipped valuables pocket too. Neat cable entry and exit ports will appeal to anyone navigating by Google Maps on their pocketed phone. My Lucienne is a cool slate green; it also comes in grey. The price of €130 is about £117, so it's a top-end product. However, it's thoughtfully designed, beautifully made, smart, functional and distinctive – a little Cote d'Azur chic for the club run or café. I regard mine as 'Sunday best'. Sizes: XS-XXL. The nearest women's equivalent is the Juliette (€115).

CTC member Arthur Findley

- PROS**
- + Comfortable
 - + Well made
- CONS**
- Expensive

Altura
VORTEX BACKPACK

£89.99
zyro.co.uk

This backpack has a good capacity-to-weight ratio, holding 25 litres and weighing only 750g. Its coated nylon fabric is seam welded, so it is waterproof in downpours – several of which I rode through this winter. It is comfortably padded and secure, having both hip and chest straps (the latter adjustable across and up and down). The external D-lock pocket is convenient, so long as you remember to hook up the lock to stop it leaping out. Inside, it's minimalist: remove the internal laptop/tablet sleeve and you're left with a deep sack with an external pocket for phones etc. I liked the bag's roll-top, but could have done with some way of reducing its volume when I wasn't carrying much. Hi-viz straps and reflective details make it an obvious choice for commuting, and it's big enough to carry some groceries on the way home too.

Cherry Allan



- PROS**
- + Light, capacious, waterproof
 - + Handy D-lock pocket
- CONS**
- External Velcro sticks to jumpers

Clive Forth
THE GREAT BRITISH ROAD RIDES GUIDE

£16.99
bloomsbury.com

THIS BOOK PROVIDES 55 routes across the UK, covering every region. There are clear and concise details on each route, including maps and elevation charts, though not enough for detailed planning. However, route cards and GPX files should be downloadable from the Bloomsbury website by the time you read this. While it's hard to comment on every route, the ones local to me in the New Forest and South Downs are great selections for those areas. Most rides start at train stations and there are often two route choices, so they're ideal for a weekend away. The routes vary in length, and include Taste Le Tour and Giro D'Italia challenges. There is not one route in this guide that doesn't inspire a ride out.

Colin Carre

