



Grouptest

Cycling trousers

Max Wall tights aren't the only option for keeping your legs warm in chillier weather. **Dan Joyce** reviews four pairs of cycling trousers



DAN JOYCE
Editor

Dan does own padded Lycra shorts (and skinsuits) but only uses them for turbo training or racing. For everything else, it's 'normal' shorts and trousers

If you don't want to go full roadie and pull on a pair of tights when it's too cold for shorts, the good news is that the choice in cycling trousers is growing. It's probably being driven by mountain bikers, for whom trail trousers are now a default winter option, and by urban cyclists, who in the English-speaking world often commute on bikes that aren't best suited to everyday clothes.

Trousers aren't as aerodynamic as tights, of course, and few come with a seat pad. Does that matter? If it does to you, you'll need padded underwear or Lycra shorts underneath them. Yet trousers are airier than tights, have pockets, and look normal off the bike. How normal varies. In *Vuelta Skelter*, Tim Moore describes his stretch-fabric trousers as "shiny and shapeless, not so much Rory McIlroy striding down the eighteenth as Angela Merkel approaching a lectern."

The trousers reviewed here are cycling specific. You can save money by buying lightweight walking trousers instead. I've done countless miles in a pair of Craghoppers Kiwi Pro II trousers that cost less than £30. (The Kiwi Pro shorts are equally good value.)

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Material

Polyamide fabric such as nylon mixed with a small amount (6-12%) of elastane (aka Lycra or spandex), so they're lightweight, slightly stretchy, and quick drying. Some have a DWR coating for shower resistance. All are crease resistant and are machine washable at 30°C.

2 Seat

Don't expect padding. Do expect a design that doesn't put thick seams between your sensitive parts and the saddle. All these trousers have flat seams. Some have a gusset, an extra diamond-shaped panel.

3 Lower legs

Darts and/or extra fabric at the knee can provide better articulation. Trousers cuffs can be kept away from the chain by:

skinny-fit or tapered legs; elasticated cuffs; a velcro strap; or a press-stud or button. Cycle clips shouldn't really be required.

4 Features

Look for a button at the waist not just a press-stud, which can pop open under pressure. Expect belt loops, some pockets (with zips for high value contents), and a cut that's higher at the back to prevent bare skin. Some have hi-viz *inside* the right trouser cuff; you're meant to roll up the leg. Mountain bike trousers may have room for knee pads. These don't.

5 Style

Commuters will want normal-looking trousers, tourers something that passes muster. Roadies and mountain bikers changing post-ride might not be bothered.



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Women's trousers

Read Sophie Gordon's review of cycling trousers for women: cyclinguk.org/women-cycling-trousers

Verdict

The Altura Esker trousers are great on the bike, thanks to a pedalling-friendly close cut, but stand out off it. Best as MTB or road gear you'll change out of.

The Chrome Brannan 'pants' are everyday trousers you put on in the morning and don't feel the need to change when you get on or off your bike. I liked them for mountain biking as well as transport cycling.

I didn't like the design or cut of the Madison Roam trousers. They're the kind of just-in-case trousers I might stick in a pannier, hoping I didn't actually need them.

The Rapha Technical Trousers are like a lighter-weight version of the Chromes: bike-friendly trousers you can wear all day. They're more comfortable still and better suit longer, more energetic rides.



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cyclinguk.org/advice

1 Altura Esker Men's Trail Trouser

£75 altura.co.uk

THE WORD 'TRAIL' tells you what these trousers are meant for: mountain biking. They work equally well on a road bike, however. They hug your ankles thanks to stretchier panels in the tapered legs. Similar panels at the high-backed waist mean they fit snugly without a belt. They're not waterproof but do have a DWR coating for light showers or trail/road spray. There's only one pocket – on the thigh – so they're less practical off the bike, and they're obviously bike gear. Colour: 'black' (grey). Sizes: men's S-XXL [S tested]; women's 8-18.

Simple, well-cut cycling trousers that are less practical off the bike

2 Chrome Brannan Pant

£147, chromeindustries.com

DESCRIBED AS "THE ultimate city riding pant", these trousers use a heavier-weight nylon/spandex fabric, which should make them more durable – somewhat mitigating the price. It also makes them hotter despite a couple of discreet vents in the crotch. The legs are straight cut but the fabric isn't flappy and didn't end up in the chain, even off-road. I wouldn't do long rides in these; I did wear them all day. Colour: black. Sizes: men's 28-38in waist, 32in or 34in leg [30x32 tested]. For women, Chrome's Madrona 5 Pocket Pant [£126] is very similar.

Well-made casual trousers that are comfy on the bike and off

3 Madison Roam men's stretch pants

£59.99 freewheel.co.uk

ON PAPER, MADISON'S Roam trousers tick all the boxes at a price £15 lower than the next cheapest tested. Lightweight, stretch fabric with a DWR coating? Check. Three zipped pockets, elasticated cuffs, fairly comfortable, and some reflective piping? Again, check. But I didn't like the press-stud waist fastening, and the shapeless cut is definitely more Merkel than McIlroy – even allowing that I should have requested size S, not M. Colours: black or 'navy haze'. Sizes: men's S-XL [M tested], women's 8-16.

Only adequate. Not the best cut for cycling or off-bike activities

4 Rapha Technical Trousers

£110 rapha.cc

THESE FEEL LIKE long-leg versions of Rapha's Randonnee Shorts, which I really rate. Primarily for city riding, they have four pockets (three zipped) and are smart enough for the office. I happily wore them for road rides too, although the relaxed cut and lightweight fabric require a cycle clip or rolled-up leg. They're good on the bike and the most comfortable trousers I've ever worn off it. The non-stretch waist requires a belt unless you're lucky with sizing. Various colours. Sizes: 28-36in waist, 30-34in leg [men's only]; 30x32 tested.

Comfortable, stylish trousers for commuting or touring