

# Gear up!

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

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## GIANT TALON 1 £650

Reviewed by editor Dan Joyce

Giant is a huge global bike company. The Talon range, however, was launched specifically for the UK market, where there's a demand for 'trail hardtails'. These differ from racier cross-country hardtails by having: a shorter, more upright riding position; a wider riser bar; and a taller fork. You can also expect a beefier frame and chunkier tyres. This set up works well for the singletrack we get at UK trail centres, where the descents are twisty but shorter and full suspension isn't vital.

The Talon 1 is the second best model in the range, which starts at £425 with the Talon 3. The hydro-formed aluminium frame offers good mud clearance around the rear tyre;

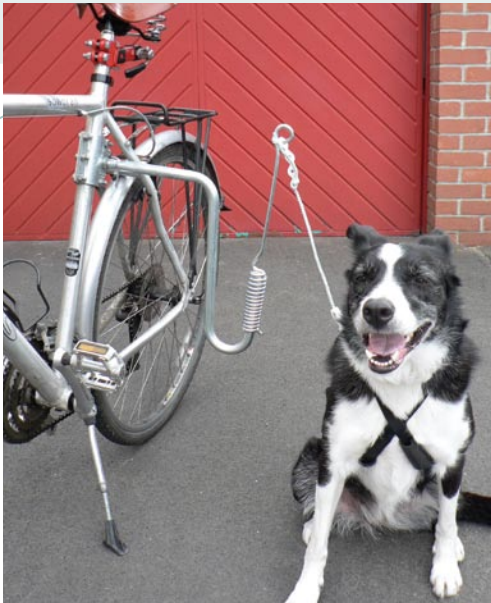
a 2.3in would also fit. The frame has rack eyelets too. Specification high points include the SLX Shadow rear derailleur in the 27-speed, largely Deore, drivetrain; the 68cm oversize riser bar; and the do-it-all Kenda Nevegal tyres. Giant's own-brand hydraulic disc brakes offer lots of power but little modulation.

If there's a weak point, it's the Dart 2 fork. It's not bad. You can adjust the rebound, so the fork won't spring back at you after bumps. You can even lock it out. But it's fairly heavy and it's stiffly sprung; I never got close to its 100mm travel. I'd prefer a Tora or Recon fork but you seldom see them on £650 bikes now. Blame the markets, not Giant.

The Talon's shorter reach (by 3cm,

compared to my 18in On-One Inbred) was immediately obvious. It felt a bit cramped and pedestrian sitting on the saddle trying to accelerate on open trails. Yet when standing on the pedals in the 'attack position' for descents and technical sections, it felt composed and controlled. It's not *my* ideal bike – I'm after comfort and pace above 'flickability' – but it's the kind of bike my teenage sons like to use for trail centres. As that's the bikes *raison d'être*, it hits its mark well. If you later upgrade to a decent 120mm fork, it'll be better yet.

*Details: head angle 69.5°, seat angle 72.5°, weight 13kg/28.6lb (no pedals, size M). Sizes: S, M, L, XL (16, 18, 20, 22in). Cheaper Talons also come in XS (13.5in). [www.giant-bicycles.com](http://www.giant-bicycles.com)*



### SPRINGER £47 PLUS £5 P&P

Reviewed by CTC member Simon Blunt

The Springer has been effective for walks/rides with my collie, who seems happy to use it when attached via a harness. It has a low arm position and a large spring and bike handling is largely unaffected by the dog. We have taken our dog for rides up to ten miles on the Springer, sometimes with trailers and tagalongs, and have had no problems. The fitting instructions are straightforward, but check that it will fit your bike: my wife's hybrid didn't have room on the seat tube to fit the bracket. For her bike we tried the Walkydog (£24.95 plus p&p, [www.innerwolf.co.uk](http://www.innerwolf.co.uk)). The Walkydog uses an arm attached to the seat post and a bungee to absorb pulling. This arrangement is considerably less effective, with pulls from the dog having a noticeable effect on the bike. In fact, when I bought a new utility bike I made sure the Springer would fit on it first.

Details: [www.springer-uk.com](http://www.springer-uk.com), tel: 01702 291518

### MIDDLEBURN RS7 CRANKS £155.50 (INC CHOICE OF SPIDER)

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

Stiffer and lighter are two recent trends for cranks, but for touring the old square-taper bottom bracket system remains simple, reliable and easily sourced the world over. I've been running these cranks (with an SKF BXC600 bottom bracket) for 8,000 tough, fully-loaded kilometres, without any issues. They're available in 160-180mm lengths – with interchangeable spiders. I've been using one of Middleburn's hard-coated 40T chainrings for Rohloff use. To eliminate the need for a crank extractor on tour, I also fitted Middleburn's self-extracting bolts. Just be sure to apply a few drops of Loctite when tightening these bolts up. Officially rated for downhill use, the R7s carry a lifetime warrantee.

Details: [www.middleburn.co.uk](http://www.middleburn.co.uk), tel: 01420 521 142



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### Geax Street Runner tyre

£16.99 EACH

I chose the 26x1.25in Street Runner for a Third World tour on surfaced and unsurfaced roads. It's fairly cheap and lightweight (490g), with some tread on the shoulders of the tyre. On the road it rolls easily at 70-80psi, with a good grip on tarmac and stone in wet and dry conditions. There were no cuts or punctures in 500km of Himalayan roads, or later during a further 750km in France. It's also available in 26x1.60in. See [www.geax.com](http://www.geax.com). Sheila Simpson

### Polaris Neolite Overshoes

£24.99

Made from thin polyurethane, these overshoes will protect summer cycling footwear from winter soakings. Fit is snug around sportier bike shoes but is a bit narrow for trainer type shoes. The thin pile lining offers warmth without bulk, while the large amount of Scotchlite is perfectly positioned to catch the glare of headlamps. A bit of day-glow would've been nice for dull December days. [www.polaris-apparel.co.uk](http://www.polaris-apparel.co.uk).

Michael Stenning



Experience the ultimate in convenience, power and reliability with the Solidlights XB2. Designed to get the most from modern hub dynamos using power LED technology, it's perfect for commuting, touring or Audax riding.

Weighing just 158g and housed in compact, super-tough aluminium alloy casing, it's seriously versatile. There's a choice of fork-crown mounting or a convenient quick-release handlebar mount. Professionally-made cables are included for easy installation and a neat, robust finish. It will run from hub dynamos or batteries (not included). It has a flashing mode for maximum visibility in town and includes a standlight to give you a few minutes of light even after the bike has stopped.

The XB2 is purpose-designed to light your way on unlit country roads so there's no need to compromise your riding after dark this winter.

For more information see our website at [www.solidlights.co.uk](http://www.solidlights.co.uk)

email [info@solidlights.co.uk](mailto:info@solidlights.co.uk)  
phone 01223 655611  
international +44 1223 655611



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## ORTLIEB OUTER POCKETS £21 EACH

*Reviewed by outdoor writer & photographer Al Churcher*

Though superb in every other aspect, Ortlieb's Back Roller panniers have an Achilles' heel – the lack of exterior pockets. To fit them, you make holes in your (expensive, waterproof) panniers using the supplied paper template and punch, then screw on the mounting rails with a Torx bit. Not being a DIY fan I was nervous fitting them but it was easy. The pockets slip onto the rails that you've fixed. You can take them off and attach them to a belt if you want.

Once fitted the pockets are secure and look like an integral part of the pannier. Each measures 20 × 12 × 7.5cm and has a capacity of 1.8 litres each. On a month's tour of Cuba I found them invaluable for tools and spares – especially items like sunscreen that I wanted to keep separate from the camera in my bar bag.

The panniers remained completely waterproof, and the pockets were sturdy enough to support a litre bottle of water each when I needed to carry more liquid

on hotter days.

I also added Ortlieb's In-put Interior Pockets (£7.82 each) and the Ortlieb QL2 Anti-Theft Device (£9.50). The In-put pockets are 24cm square. They have a zipped document pocket for a diary, spare maps and so on, and three smaller pockets for pens etc. Two nylon tabs slip into place between the interior stiffeners and pannier back. They're simple but useful.

The anti-theft device comprises a couple of steel cables. With the panniers on, you simply wrap the cables around the seat-stays and lock them in place with a small suitcase-type padlock. They're useful for those short café or toilet stops when you don't want to take off loaded panniers - though to be honest most thieves would take some time working out how to unclip your panniers anyway. A couple of plastic clips keep the cables out of the way when not in use.

*Details: [www.ortlieb.de](http://www.ortlieb.de)*

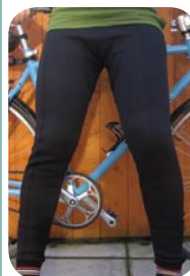
## Cycle shorts

### Land's End to John O'Groats DVD £14.98 INC P&P

This is the documentary-style story of a seven-day End-to-End trip, using main roads. There are interviews with experts on diet and nutrition, training, exercise and bike preparation, which are useful whether you're doing the trip in one week or several. Recommended – just don't use their route unless you're an experienced cyclist! From [www.jollygoodtv.co.uk](http://www.jollygoodtv.co.uk) – or call CTC National Office. *Mark Waters*



### Tudor Sports 'York' Tights £34.25 PLUS P&P



Classic bike kit becomes so because it works. These cotton/nylon tights are heavier weight than Lycra ones, with a snug fleecy lining. They're well cut for cycling, with a high back, close fit and a

double seat. Ankle zips making fitting and removal easy. Ideal for November to March, we'd only add a pocket zip and a strip of Scotchlite. [www.tudorsports.co.uk](http://www.tudorsports.co.uk), tel: 07710 095 297. *Dan Joyce*

### Howies NBL Light LS £50

Merino wool is great as a base layer. It wicks moisture, insulates when damp and doesn't smell. It's pricier than synthetics but feels snug, with comfortable flat seams. Cut is generous; I'd fit size S. Sizes S-XL. [www.howies.co.uk](http://www.howies.co.uk). *Dan Joyce*

