

# Gear up!

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

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### ROCKSHOX REBA RACE FORK £449

Reviewed by touring & audax cyclist  
Sheila Simpson

Suspension forks are designed primarily for mountain biking, and as the name says this one is meant for racers – or at least, for fitting to a lightweight cross-country bike. I got it for touring. Suspension forks are an unusual option for the tourist but they are comfortable on rough mountain roads, so after being well shaken about in the Himalayas, I invested in a lightweight mountain bike frame and this well-regarded RockShox fork.

This fork is in two sliding parts, oriented the usual way around – uppers into lowers. The uppers are aluminium and the lowers magnesium, with a dual air suspension chamber between the two. Before you ride, you must ensure that the air chambers are at the pressure that suits your weight, otherwise the suspension will not work ideally for you – full details in the handbook though the shock pump is not included in the price. The fork has a handy poploc, a lever that switches almost all suspension off, for climbing on relatively smooth roads. There is also a control that dampens suspension rebound. I left this on 'rabbit', least

damping, which seemed to work best on the irregularities of rough roads.

I trialled the fork from my doorstep into the Derbyshire Peak District and could feel it ironing out badly maintained surfaces even before leaving town. On climbs, the firming effect of the poploc, switching off the suspension, was noticeable; I used this control continually, glad to have opted for the remote option on the handlebars. On steep, potholed descents I was impressed with the suspension's feeling of stability, compared with the jolting through traditional steel or carbon forks. As hoped, I was far less thrown about and the ride was less tiring.

By mountain bike standards, the fork is lightweight but at 1625g (3.58lb) it is heavier than a normal touring fork. It is also a lot more expensive, though you can often find the fork discounted. If you keep a stable of cycles or your touring normally includes rough mountain country, then this fork is excellent. If you maintain only one all-purpose touring bike then you may balk at the weight penalty and price.

**Details:** [rockshox.com](http://rockshox.com).

**Distributed in the UK by Fisher Outdoor,** [fisheroutdoor.co.uk](http://fisheroutdoor.co.uk)

### MKS Custom Pro Pedals £109.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Silky smooth cartridge bearings and a robust build go a long way to justifying the high price of these quill pedals. The aluminium cage and body are asymmetrical – there's only one side to pedal properly on. As such, they're better used with their optional steel toe clips and leather straps. They

felt too nice (and pricy!) on my town hack – my only bike with flat pedals. They look lovely, though, and if you've got a retro road bike or just don't use clipless pedals on your top-end tourer, these are well worth considering.

**Details:** 292g/pair. From [zyro.co.uk](http://zyro.co.uk). Clips an extra £9.99, straps £17.99.



## STRONGLIGHT MUDGUARDS £12.50 or £18

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

Stronglight's new mudguards are laminated from black or clear plastic with an aluminium foil core: like SKS, but costing less. The stays are sturdy stainless steel with effective and rattle-free safety-release fittings up front.

The cheapest is the E-type, where the stays are attached by plastic fittings clipped onto the edges of the guard and tightened by a stainless screw. The stays must be trimmed to length first and care taken not to over-tighten the screw. But the finished job looks neat and is more stable than SKS's no-metal-bridges design, probably because the Stronglight guard is thicker. Plus it comes with mudflaps.

Their S-type (pictured) has the usual stainless steel bridges, but with nylon drawbolts and nuts. The drawbolt moulding cleverly incorporates a ferrule to cover the sharp end of the stay, but I have little faith in small plastic screwthreads. And one did jump its threads when I carefully adjusted it after 500 miles and two flights.

In conclusion, I'd recommend Stronglight E-type as a more sturdy and much cheaper (only £12.50) alternative to SKS Bluemels SPB-type.



Meanwhile Stronglight S-type would be an economical (£18) replacement for SKS Chromoplastics – but hang onto your old metal drawbolts and nuts! Both designs are available black or silver in 35, 42 and 48mm widths for 27in (700C) and 54mm for 26in, plus S-54mm also for 27in.

**Details:** Prices are from [spacycles.co.uk](http://spacycles.co.uk) (01423 887003). Available from other dealers via [greyville.com](http://greyville.com).



## Telegraph Road jerseys £49

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

Telegraph Road jerseys echo the heritage of road racing – without advertising a Belgian furniture store etc! I'm no racer, but I liked the look of the Mountain Badges design, which includes souvenirs of some of the passes I've ridden my (touring) bike over. Worn on local club runs, it received favourable comment from other riders and performed very well in hot conditions. There's an array of different-sized rear pockets, one with a zip, the hem has a silicone gripper and the front zip-pull has a novelty compass – not recommended for navigation!

**Details:** for sizing and other designs, see [telegraph-road.com](http://telegraph-road.com).

A vertical photograph of a young child wearing a bright red bicycle helmet and a blue and white striped t-shirt. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

**ISLABIKES**  
**HAPPY DAYS**  
www.ISLABIKES.CO.UK TEL: 01746 710835  
models available for children from 2 - 12 years

**ISLABIKES**  
www.ISLABIKES.CO.UK



## Kryptonite Modulus lock £30/£35

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

This is a modular cable lock from Kryptonite, meant to deter the opportunistic thief. It comprises one lock head and a choice of cable styles. The lock head has two sockets: to secure both ends of a single cable or one end each of two noose cables. And that's what it comes with: 1.8m of 10mm thick, plastic coated self-coiling cable or two similar 1.1m nooses. The single cable is cheaper (£30 RRP) easier to deploy and store, but two nooses (£35) can tether more things further apart. You choose!

I found such stiff coils hard to stretch out and if you don't need the cable to compact itself for storage on the bike, you might prefer one of the optional straight cables: 1.8m continuous or 1.5m noose. Of course the same lock head can be used with different cables for other locking jobs, and additional heads can daisy-chain continuous cables.

Each lock comes with a mounting bracket that straps to a cycle frame tube or roof-rack bar etc., or can be attached via bottle-cage bosses. I preferred the single cable option, since only a painstaking tethering of the two nooses could keep them away from my legs.

Details: see [kryptonitelock.com](http://kryptonitelock.com). Available in the UK via Madison [madison.co.uk](http://madison.co.uk)



## Rigida Tungsten Carbide wheels

RIM £59.99 (+ £47.50 SPOKES & LABOUR)

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

These rims use a tungsten carbide coating similar to the Rigida Grizzly rims I've previously tested. However, the Andra 30s are a tougher, heavier-weight version (735g) for expedition touring. As provided by SJS Cycles, they've been drilled for the larger flange of a Rohloff hub – otherwise, spokes have a habit of breaking. The coating itself is incredibly hard wearing. The rim photographed has already seen ten thousand kilometres of off-road touring, in everything from snow storms to dusty, rocky trails. Impressively, it's stayed completely true and is showing very minimal signs of wear – which in my mind, justifies the steep price tag. Just be sure to use Swiss Stops' equally hard wearing CSS Blue brake pads, as normal pads wear away like butter. Also available in an eyeleted, 36-hole version for derailleur driven bikes.

Details: rim & wheelbuild from [sjscycles.com](http://sjscycles.com). Price doesn't include hub



## Tarptent Rainbow £152 APPROX PLUS £20 P&P

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

As the name suggests, the Tarptent Rainbow is a fusion of a tarp and a tent – an innovative ultra-light, singleskin shelter complete with sewn-in mosquito net. For the lightweight tourer, there's a lot to like about it. For its minimal 910g weight, it's incredibly roomy; even at 6'1", my feet aren't close to touching the ends, with plenty of space for sitting up – always welcome after a long day in the saddle. It will sleep two at a squeeze, or one with ample room for baggage. Pack size is tiny – without the single pole, it rolls down to the volume of a small loaf of bread. However, like all singleskin tents, the Rainbow is prone to condensation.

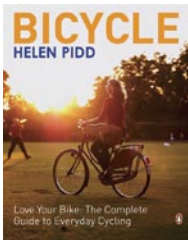
While it will keep you dry in the heaviest of downpours, you'll need to seam seal it first, and take care not to touch the tent walls. Using a separate ground sheet is recommended too. The tent needs to be pegged down, which can be limiting, though at a push, sticks



can be used. Overall, the Rainbow will survive but ultimately doesn't suit long-term extreme conditions – anything in between, and it's ideal. Best of all, you'll barely notice you're carrying it. Highly recommended.

Details: \$225 from [tarptent.com](http://tarptent.com)

## Cycle shorts



**Bicycle, by Helen Pidd**  
**£14.99**

Reviewed by Victoria Hazael

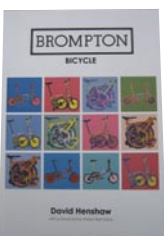
A great book for friends who want to cycle but don't know where to start, this practical guide covers bike buying, maintenance, training, policy, the helmet debate, theft, and a history of cycling. 'Bicycle' is well written and upbeat, and also packed with illustrations and nice photos too. 256pp, ISBN 9781905490530



**Two Wheels on my Wagon**  
**£10.99**

Reviewed by Rosie Downes

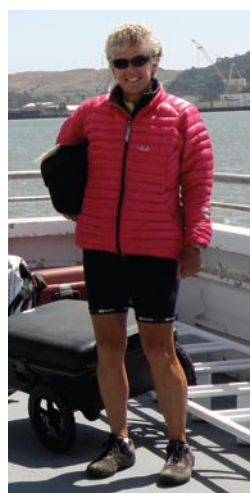
Paul Howard describes the Tour Divide, a 2,800-mile MTB race down the Rocky Mountains from Canada to Mexico. He rode up to 165 miles each day yet kept notes detailed enough for vivid descriptions, from the pies on sale in Pie Town to poetic reveries on the landscape. An engrossing read. 272pp, ISBN 9781845965617



**Brompton Bicycle**  
**£11.95**

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

David Henshaw's book is a fascinating and in depth look at the development of the iconic folding bike. There's good section on looking after your Brompton too. The tone is a little indulgent (other folders are better at certain roles), but this is nevertheless recommended reading for folding bike fans. 280pp, ISBN: 9781905974016



**RAB MICROLIGHT JACKET** £130

Reviewed by CTC member Harry Lyons

This is a seriously lightweight jacket. We each opted for these down jackets instead of fleeces when we kitted up for our Transamerica ride. Weighing in at 330 grams for the men's large, it packs into its own pocket for neat storage. It was warm on cold mornings in the mountains, windproof at the blustery coast and easily stowed in the handlebar bag when the sun came out. I've even worn it in wintry weather – it was great with a couple of layers of Merino wool underneath. Like all down jackets it doesn't like getting wet and although the shell claims to be water resistant it probably wouldn't shrug off more than a heavy mist. We used it in combination with a Montane waterproof jacket. Finally, it looks good, generating plenty of complimentary comments. Expensive but well worth it (we used our CTC discount with Cotswold).

**Details: men's sizes S-XXL, in black, mirage or fig; women's sizes 8-16 in black, grape, rose, truffle or aqua. See [rab.uk.com](http://rab.uk.com) and [cotswoldoutdoor.com](http://cotswoldoutdoor.com)**



**Kenda Karma tyres** £30.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

It's tempting to leave fairly heavily treaded tyres on your mountain bike so you've got enough grip when you need it. But grip isn't just about tread depth and patterns. It also comes from pressure (lower puts more rubber on the trail), rubber compound (suppler and softer is grippier but wears quicker), and size – diameter as well as width. Twenty-niners (700C) provide slightly better traction and seem to be able to get away with less tread than a 26in tyre. In 26in, Kenda's Karma is a decently quick-rolling summer tyre. In 29in, I've found it grippy enough for wetter rides too. And it rolls better than the chunky Panaracer Rampages I had on. Like Schwalbe's Albert, a good compromise. **Details: Sizes: 29x1.90 (50-622), 29x2.2 (55-622), 26x2, from [www.kenda.uk.com](http://www.kenda.uk.com)**

**OPTX 20/20 HYDROTAC LENSES.** £15

Reviewed by CTC member Gerry Goldsmith

I used these removable soft lenses to convert my cycling glasses into bifocals – very useful for reading a map or GPS on the handlebars. They come in standard magnifications from +1.25 up to +3. Trim them if needed and stick on with a drop of water. This pair have survived a few years' regular use – with careful washing. I stuck a second pair to my sunglasses, but they were not so easy to fit because the lenses



of those are more curved. **Details: I bought mine from [visiondirect.co.uk](http://visiondirect.co.uk) for about £15. For other suppliers, see [optx2020.com](http://optx2020.com).**





## SUPERNOVA TRIPLE

£245 plus dynamo wheel

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

The Supernova E3 Triple is a dynamo headlamp from Germany intended for mountain biking. The factors that made dynamo lighting a non-starter off-road have been answered one-by-one by new technology.

Dynamos have too much drag and slip on muddy tyres? Not when they're in a hub. 3W isn't enough power? It can be with more efficient light sources. The light dims just when you need it to negotiate an obstacle? True for a bulb, where the spectrum shifts to invisible infra-red, but LEDs don't do that and although output falls, a dynamo-LED system at half design speed produces more than half as much light, so you'll still see at least 70% as far. But you'll be completely in the dark if you stop? Not with today's electronic technology, to extract, store and release extra power.

The Supernova E3 Triple packs all of those answers into a lamp that's shown several champion 24-hour MTB racers their route to victory. But real riding is different from racing and I was keen to see how it would compare with the brilliant mains-rechargeables employed by my fellow nightriders.

Up to walking speed just one LED came on, giving ample light to get started. It wasn't so good for picking the smoothest path up a steep hill, but sufficed. Above 3mph the other two kicked in and things got steadily

brighter. Meanwhile a little power was diverted to a super-capacitor that boosted the initial LED for a while if I slowed right down again and provided enough light to see where I was if I stopped. This 'standlight' dims with time, but lasted for 7 minutes (12 without a rear lamp). Unfortunately the standlight remained on when I switched off the power, wasting light and drawing unwelcome attention to the parked bike.

Back on the trail and now going faster than 8mph, the lamp came into its own. Apparently some electricrery hoodwinks the alternator into delivering considerably more than its regulation three watts, boosting total light output to a claimed maximum of 680 lumens. That's a lot brighter than my old halogen bulbs, but not as brilliant as some of the rechargeable LED or HID systems I've seen. Up to speed, the Triple is well bright enough for familiar trails or those not too narrow and twisty. But unlike the predictable circuit of a 24h race, real trails are often neither familiar nor open, so I tried to get lost in the local woods. And I succeeded!

When the speed drops, output falls to something like my old halogens. And whilst the beam is wider than a typical dynamo lamp designed for road use, it doesn't shed as much light to the sides

as a flood. For exploratory riding I'd combine the E3 triple with a headtorch – which is useful anyway in case of mechanical problems.

I'll certainly not be reverting to batteries. I appreciate the autonomy of generating power myself: the freedom from recharging batteries and to ride as long as I like off-road too. The only snag with the Triple is dazzling oncoming drivers. You'll need to shade it with a hand. (Supernova make other E3 lamps for mainly road use.) The optional rear lamp is incredibly neat and bright and comes in two versions: to fit EU standard rear carriers or seatposts. I bodged it to fit a seat stay.

You might be wondering about the 'heavy' dynamo hub. I used a Shimano Alfine. It weighs 220g more than a regular XT front hub, plus 180g for the lamp with cables & bracket. My old rechargeable battery alone is 690g. Admittedly you can now get 4-hour Li-ion systems half that weight, but a SON-delux hub would also save 100g, run as long as your legs keep moving and be guaranteed for five years. So no worries about the E3 Triple being light enough, in both senses of the word!

**Details: £245, plus the cost of a dynamo wheel. Optional rear lamp is £40. See [supernova-lights.com](http://supernova-lights.com). UK Distribution by [Amba Marketing](http://Amba Marketing), [amba-marketing.com](http://amba-marketing.com)**