

# Gear up!

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

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## JTEK BAR-END SHIFTER £75 APPROX

Reviewed by cycle engineer Chris Bell

Shimano's Alfine 8-speed hub gear is an excellent alternative to derailleur gears but your options are limited if you want to use it on a bike with drop handlebars, as it doesn't work with derailleur shifters. The Versa VRS8 combined brake and gear lever works, but its cable routing gets in the way of a bar-bag.

A better touring solution is a Jtek bar-end lever, available direct from its American manufacturer or SJS Cycles and The Tandem Shop in the UK. It's very neat and is a joy to use; you'll appreciate being able to shift across all eight gears in one go, even stationary. The only problem you're likely to find when fitting it is deciding where to add a cable adjuster; I added one to the outer cable stop on the hub gear itself.

The Jtek shifter works faultlessly when new but mine broke after 4,000 miles. Its cartridge bearing disintegrated in France. It's an imperial type, unavailable outside the USA. I found an engineer to turn a plain bearing to get me home.

It seems that Jtek's bearing is too delicate to cope with occasional sideways knocks to the lever. All I can suggest is that you pack a spare R4-2RS bearing in your toolkit (buy online). Another problem is that the aluminium indexing indents wear and I estimate you'll need to replace your shifter after 8-10,000 miles even if the bearing lasts that long.

But there's nothing else like it and, if you treat it carefully, it works very well indeed. I've installed a new one but have modified the bearing to make it stronger. I've also added dots to show which gear I'm in. Even without these modifications, it's worth serious consideration by any drop-bar tourist.

From: [sjscycles.co.uk](http://sjscycles.co.uk) and [thetandemshop.com](http://thetandemshop.com)

## CARRADICE MULTITOOL 11-IN-1 £16

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Topeak and Lezyne produce piles of multitools. What can Carradice offer? Well, obviously not plastic: the sideplates are laser-etched bamboo, which is hard wearing. The chrome-vanadium steel tools are: 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8mm allen keys; cross and flat head screwdrivers; a T25 torx bit; and a chain tool. These work fine, although the chain splitter is cumbersome as you turn the multitool body to extract or refit rivets. Still, not bad. The 10-in-1 drops the chain tool, the 8-in-1 also the 8mm allen and the Torx.

Details: 200g, [carradice.co.uk](http://carradice.co.uk), 01282 615886





### OVERBOARD PANNIERS

£38 EACH

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

These panniers are simple roll-top welded bags, like Ortlieb was making 25 years ago. They have a few more up-to-date features and are waterproof, but the top hooks are the sort of plastic that softens in the hot places people like to go touring, and are fixed in position, so you need to check if they fit your carrier. I wouldn't trust their bigger bag not to go overboard, but the 12-litre front/universal pannier (pictured) will probably stay on the bike.

Bar-bags are harder to get right – and Overboard don't. The roll-top-plus-flap is too much faff and the bag mounts on a soft plastic bracket I've seen before, with a cheap bar-bag drooping from it onto the front brake! The bag's stiffener is too flexible and the bracket does not grip the handlebar tightly enough to resist twisting. If you want welded bags but can't afford Ortlieb, there are better budget options.

From: [overboard.co.uk](http://overboard.co.uk)

### TIFOSI VENTUS £34.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Keeping sun, wind, dirt and insects out of your eyes can be an expensive business. At £35 these Ventus glasses are affordable, albeit twice as much as my Madison Shields. These *are* nicer. You can bend the rubberised arm ends to fit your head better and the nosepiece is comfortable. Vents in the top of the polycarbonate lenses help stop them fogging. You get three lenses: clear, red (right), and smoke. Swapping takes seconds. Why pay more?

Details: [zyro.co.uk](http://zyro.co.uk)



### BIOLOGIC FREEDRIVE CHAIN COVER £9.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

It's hard to find a chaincase in the UK unless your roadster came with one. You can get hockey-stick style guards like the SKS Chainboard (from £17 online) but if you want to hide the chain, then the Hebie Chainglider was until recently the only readily available option. That's a clip-together plastic tube that sits around and rests on the chain, only working on single-chainline bikes and only certain chainring and sprocket combinations. I've used one but found the extra drivetrain friction annoying. The Biologic Freedrive is a similar: a slit plastic tube that you cut to length and fit over the top of chain; it moves with it. The Freedrive too works only with singlespeeds or hub gears and the sprocket must be 17T or more. Friction isn't bad but the U-shaped profile means the inner run of chain is exposed and can dirty your jeans – albeit not nearly as badly as bare chain.

Details: [zyro.co.uk](http://zyro.co.uk)

### REYNOLDS SHOES £95.50 INC P&P

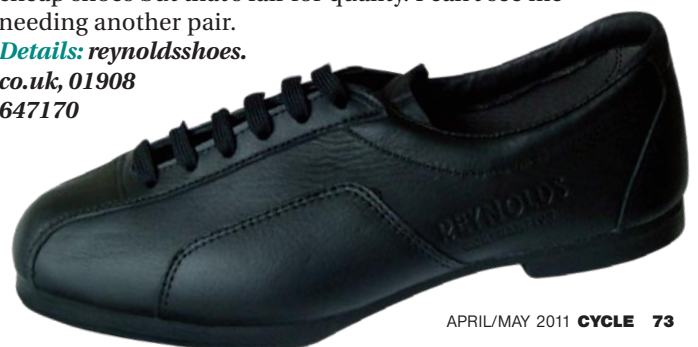
Reviewed by CTC member Colin Whiting

These are the type of traditional leather cycling shoes that I remember from the Fifties, so a real retro experience. There are no cleats or anything, just a smooth sole. I have owned my pair for several years and use them every day. Being British made in Northampton they have a wide fitting, unlike Continental shoes, and are very comfortable. Because they are black leather they look smart compared to trainers. They have a rigid sole that makes walking awkward, though short distances are fine. I change at work into shoes kept there. On tour I have the luxury of another pair of shoes for

sightseeing, something I've always done anyway.

Reynolds has advertised forever in the CTC magazine but never seem to get a mention in any articles. These are not cheap shoes but that's fair for quality. I can't see me needing another pair.

Details: [reynoldsshoes.co.uk](http://reynoldsshoes.co.uk), 01908 647170



## MADISON EVO LITE JACKET £99.99

Reviewed by recumbent cyclist & engineer Mike Burrows

Clothing manufacturers don't seem to have noticed us laid-back cyclists. Nevertheless, Madison have introduced a range of jackets with varying degrees of weather protection and all with the pockets in the front. Yes! No more squashed bananas or lost keys. This Evo Lite is a 'shell' jacket, keeping out wind and rain but with no thermal layer. It's not one of the super-light crumple-up-into-its-own-pocket types. This does mean that if you are using it as a summer waterproof you'll need a bag on your bike to store it.

There are three main pockets, all with waterproof zips, plus an extra one in the left sleeve that looks a bit 'designer'. There are several clever strings and toggles and Velcro bits to keep out the worst or let off steam, and one very nice feature: the main zip is offset at the top, so no tickling of the chin.

How well it works as a summer standby I cannot say, as it arrived just in time for the coldest December on record. All it has had to cope with is rain, sleet, hail, snow and wind, in various combinations, which in



conjunction with a long-sleeved vest and selection of old cycling tops it has done perfectly. It is said to 'breathe' but this is a relative quality. It is not a hard-riding top. There are adjustable side vents that coped with the needs of my daily commute well enough and should be fine for touring.

I am not normally a fan of shell jackets, but this one is the best bit of commuting gear, laid back or upright, that I have ever worn. The only thing that took a little getting used to was the price. It did seem a lot for something that weighed so little. But then I remembered: this is cycling; it's supposed to be like that.

**From:** [madison.co.uk](http://madison.co.uk), sizes XS-L

## Cycle shorts



### The Good Mountain Biking Guide £19.95

Reviewed by Dan Joyce  
With 700 route ideas

across England & Wales, plus details of trail centres, this is a real off-road compendium. Each page has a map showing legal trail sections, an area 'fact file', and a sketchy route. I prefer the Landranger mapping and detailed directions of Vertebrate's regional guides, but this one should inspire rides country-wide. 640pp, Active Maps Ltd, ISBN 9780956802903



### A History of the Tricycle £12 + £2.40 P&P

Reviewed by Dan Joyce  
Covering upright trikes from the 17th

Century to the present, this is full of drawings, adverts, and photos of everything from differential axles to cornering racing tricyclists. While the coverage of marques and engineering will appeal most to Tricycle Association members, the section on Victorian inventions would fascinate any cyclist. 116pp, hardback, ISBN 9780956633705. To order, email [bibibugg@uk2.net](mailto:bibibugg@uk2.net)

## CYCRAGUARD REAR MTB £14.99

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Fashionistas would rather be wet and dirty(er) than use mudguards, but a seatpost-mounted plastic guard makes sense. This CycraGuard is the same price as the better-known Crud Raceguard. It's fiddlier to fit, with its toothed angle adjustment, but sits securely once done, and the clamp looks less stressed. It's about 4cm longer and you can fit guard to bracket 2cm closer to the bike end, so it reaches ever further back. Good news if you get spray coming over the tip of other guards, as you do on, say, a 29er.

**Details:** [madison.co.uk](http://madison.co.uk)

