

GEAR UP

SUBMIT A REVIEW

If you want to submit a review, write or email the editor – details on page 86 – for advice on how to go about it. Each one printed wins a ready-for-anything Lezyne CRV19 multitool, worth £29.99. For more about Lezyne tools, pumps, lights, and other products, visit

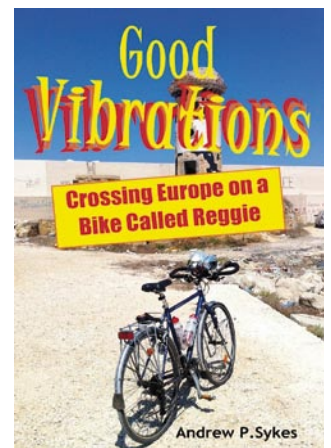
upgradebikes.co.uk



**GOOD VIBRATIONS:
CROSSING EUROPE ON A
BIKE CALLED REGGIE**
£8.99 (£2.99 AS EBOOK)

Reviewed by Chris Peck

'Never judge a book by its cover'; to which I would add: 'nor its title'. I embarked on this book somewhat wearily but was quickly won over by Andrew Sykes's engaging, self-deprecating style. His account of his transformation from daily cycle commuter to trans-European long distance cyclist is full of humorous asides, observations and anecdotes. For anyone contemplating a long expedition by bike, I can't recommend a better book to read for inspiration. ISBN 9781849142137. Available from cyclingeurope.org



ZIXTRO PHOTO TOURER
£39.95

Reviewed by CTC Cycling

Development Officer Seamus Kelly

Carrying cameras on bikes can be a tricky balance between effective protection and quick and easy access. The Photo Tourer is a neat looking, moulded-EVA hardcase handlebar bag with room for a Digital SLR. Access is good, with a rear-opening zip so you can get at the camera whilst on the bike. There is a moveable divider, and a detachable strap to carry the bag away from the bike. For bad weather, a bright yellow waterproof cover is included although you have to remove this to open the bag. A silicone rubber panel on top carries a phone or GPS allowing the display to be seen whilst riding; it is not weatherproof.

An unpaddinged velour lining prevents scratching but offers no protection against vibration and knocks. The handlebar bracket uses plastic spacers to fit different diameter bars (25.4-31.8mm). On the road, carrying my DSLR, the bag would not stay in place however much I tightened the bolts.



You'll need to add your own padding inside the bar bag to protect your camera (above). The phone or GPS holder (below) is handy but not weatherproof

Would I trust my cameras to this bag? Without padding and an improved grip on the handlebars, I'm afraid not. If Zixtro resolves those issues this could be a useful camera bag. Until then, I'd probably get a medium or large Ortlieb bar bag (from £59.95), with padded camera insert (£18.50) and GPS cover (£18.50), as that would offer quality protection and good access, albeit at a price. Mountain bikers, meanwhile, will no doubt want to put the camera in a backpack – or in a waterproof camera bag attached to the front of the shoulder straps with karabiners.

nemesisgb.com
zixtro.com



SCHWALBE RACING RALPH TYRES

£45.99 each

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

Schwalbe have redesigned their popular summer cross-country tyre for 2012, claiming to have saved 30g and improved rolling resistance by 20%. I've only used Racing Ralphs in 26in size in the past, and as I tested 29er tyres this time (54-622 rear, 60-622 front), I can't verify that. But they *are* light, at 535g and 592g respectively for these Evolution Line versions, and they roll very well indeed. The tread lugs are shallow and widely spaced, particularly in the 29er option; Schwalbe have spaced them further apart on the bigger tyre size because its longer contact patch ought to grip just as well with a more open tread. The sidewalls are very supple, which must help rolling efficiency too. They might be vulnerable to sharp rocks, although I've raced down less flinty rocky gulleys without incident.

Grip is very good for such a lightly treaded tyre. In the wettest April since records began, they found enough traction in all but the deepest mud when run at 2 bar. They're tubeless-ready, so you could run them softer yet if you switched the innertube for a sealing kit and some liquid latex. Having said that, a



grippier tyre up front – such as Schwalbe's own Nobby Nic – will offer more steering confidence. And you'll want toothier tyres at both ends come winter. For firmer trails, however, the Racing Ralph is excellent, rolling better than Kenda's Small Block Eight and not clogging with mud nearly so readily.

It's available in a range of 26in and 29in mountain bike sizes, including tubular versions, and as a cyclo-cross tyre. The latter might do for a rough-stuff tourer, if you're more concerned with efficiency and grip than durability. schwalbe.com



CYCLE LONDON

£12.99

Reviewed by bicycle designer Mike Burrows

These rides are distinguished not by their length but variety, everything from a three-mile crawl along the embankment to a bracing 43 miles to the seaside. They're mostly in and around the capital, which is not the sort of place you would associate with cycling for pleasure, there being a distinct lack of hills and dales. Actually they are there but they have all been covered in stuff. Still, that stuff can be very interesting. London was the most important city in the world in its day, and it's arguably still the most colourful, interesting and diverse. And on a Sunday, even the City isn't too choked. Cycle touring but not as we know it. ISBN 978-1-84670-236-5, timeout.com



WHITE LIGHTING CHAIN JOHNNY

£19.99

Reviewed by Sophie Edmondson

It's a simple design for a simple purpose: covering your oily chain, primarily for transportation – I'm not sure I'd trust it for outdoor parking. It fitted easily over my road bike drivetrain and it claims to do the same for MTBs. It's made of a rip-resistant, two-ply rubber/nylon material, and attaches easily with Velcro fastenings; inevitably I ended up with muck on my hands in the process. At £20, it may seem a gimmick but it will save your car upholstery or clothing and it won't tear like a bin liner. madison.co.uk

MUC-OFF ULTIMATE BICYCLE KIT

£58

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

The main advantage of a bundled cleaning kit like this is that it makes a good gift. Any cyclist will be able to make use of at least some of the contents. Inside the chunky storage box, you get: biodegradable bike cleaner (one litre); bike spray (500ml); wet lube (50ml); biodegradable chain cleaner (250ml); microfibre cloth; sponge; and a selection of brushes (big and soft, two prong, small triangular, and claw). No disc brake cleaner, oddly. I like the bike cleaner the best: it makes it much easier to remove road grime or caked on dirt from your bike. The claw brush is handy too, for scraping dirt off jockey wheels and out from between sprockets. Everything else is effective but duplicates the much cheaper and 'good enough' alternatives you can pick up from hardware or car accessory shops. So as much as I like the box, it's probably better to purchase separately only the items you really need. muc-off.com





MAXXRAXX 2 BIKE WALL RACK

£59

Reviewed by CTC Technical Support Lead Officer Dan Cook

Maxxraxx make a variety of bike racks for vehicles and home. This is a solid and substantial rack system to hold two bikes in your garage or cellar. With three big stardriver screws (adapter supplied), the mounting bracket fixed easily and solidly to the wall, and the support arm and frame mounts took seconds from there.

I was worried about the bikes balancing on a single arm but the cradles are sufficiently long to secure each bike well. Total weight limit is 50kg. The cross strap seemed superfluous unless you live in an earthquake zone. And it was a little awkward to thread between the

brake/gear cables and top tubes, where it is positioned to prevent those cables scratching the paintwork. The lock strap is a nice touch, however. Your bikes are likely to be stored somewhere near tools that could remove this with a bit of time, but any additional security is welcome.

At £59, it's not the cheapest bike storage solution, but you do get a lot for your money: it functions well and makes good use of space, and you can sort of use it as a workstand. I think if I was going to display my pride and joy in the house, rather than the garage or cellar, I'd choose a Cycloc (cycloc.com); review coming next issue.

maxxraxx.com

ORTLIEB COFFEE FILTER HOLDER

£8.50

Reviewed by CTC member Chris Reed

This is more of a camping accessory than a cycle accessory but it's a great little product for coffee-loving cycle campers. Made from Ortlieb bag material and using two tent pegs for support, it is a clever coffee filter holder. It takes size 4 filters, five of which are supplied. It weighs little and takes up almost no pannier space yet makes great coffee while camping; there is a small gap in the stitching to allow to coffee to flow. As expected from Ortlieb, it is well made and likely to last for many years.

ortlieb.co.uk



KONTACT SADDLE

£79

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

This saddle was designed by Joshua Cohen, a cyclist with a master's degree in Human Movement Science who wrote 'Finding the Perfect Bicycle Seat', which we reviewed in the Apr/May 05 issue. He did research into the genital blood flow and suchlike and concluded that what was needed was a flatter saddle top that narrowed abruptly to the nose. The aim, as with all anatomic saddles, was for the saddle to

bear your weight on your sit bones rather than soft tissue. This saddle does just that. The Contact Bike website says 'It's a seat unlike any other.' To me, it felt very similar to sitting on Rido's R-Lt saddle (see Oct/Nov 11). If that didn't exist, I'd be more impressed by the Contact. Like the Rido R-Lt that I prefer, it seems best suited to athletic road cycling. It's light, at only 197g, thanks to titanium alloy rails, and it is 130mm wide.

hubjub.co.uk, kontaktbike.com

THE POCKET MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL GUIDE

£9.99

Reviewed by Ian

Warby

Clive Forth's

latest book is a take-with-you trail guide that covers all the essentials in six colour-coded sections, from trailside repairs through to the mountain bike skills, pre-ride checks through to emergency procedures. It's easy to navigate and get straight to the information you need. All Clive's advice is concise easy to understand, for beginners and experienced riders alike, and the photography makes the steps outlined straightforward to follow. The skills section covers everything from braking through to jumping. Throughout the book, there are plenty of tips, while Clive's 'notes from the trail' give you a real world perspective.

ISBN 9781408141984

