

Reviews

Gear up

COMPONENTS, KIT, AND MEDIA SELECTED
AND REVIEWED BY BIKE JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

Put to the test

Is there a product that you think needs reviewing?

Write to: *Cycle*, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

@editor@cyclingsuk.org

Pros & cons

- + Great power production
- + Easy to fit
- Somewhat bulky



PedalCell

A high-powered generator to keep your smartphone and other USB devices topped up

\$299.99 pedalcell.com

The PedalCell is a reinvention of the traditional bottle dynamo. It delivers far more power and can charge multiple USB devices at the same time. It has two main parts: a generator (17x7.5x5cm) with a rubber O-ring that runs on the wheel rim; and a 'smart power hub' that houses supercapacitors and evens out the varying power flow from the generator unit. It's easy to fit to virtually any fork, and adds 490g in total.

The power hub has two USB-C ports rated to produce 3W and 12W (max) respectively. The latter 'high power' port is for power-hungry devices like phones and

action cameras, while the 3W port is for those who want to limit drag at high speeds. You can also disengage the generator for a drag-free ride.

So does it really produce much more power than other electricity-generating cycle accessories? It certainly outperformed any other charging solution that I've tried. Using the higher-rated 12W charging port, an hour's ride put 10% in my smartphone battery even though it was running power-hungry GPS and route-tracking software.

Rough calculations suggest the PedalCell was generating an average of 6-8W – exactly

in line with a graph produced by independent testing outfit FahrradZukunft, who found that the PedalCell produced more Watts per km/h or mph than all other contenders. It's important to note that all this power doesn't get stored in the device(s) being charged. There are inefficiencies in cables and batteries that will vary, depending on your setup.

I didn't test the system in very wet weather – just summer showers – so I can't comment on its resistance to very wet conditions. PedalCell say that, as long as the USB ports are kept dry, the rest of the system should stand up to wet and mud due to its strong construction and waterproof seals.

Other caveats: it's not recommended for carbon rims; and regular stops of more than a minute will impact on the unit's output.

PedalCell is a US company, hence the price in dollars, but they ship to the UK. The price works out at about £216, plus taxes and shipping. ●

Richard Peace

Other options



VELOGICAL VELO GRID €370 (~£315)

Similar principles to the PedalCell and much smaller, though reports suggest a smaller power output. USB charger must be manually wired by the purchaser. velogical-engineering.com



IGARO D2 USB CHARGER £210

Requires some manual wiring, plus you'll need a generator such as a =quality hub dynamo like the SON 28. With a wheel build, that'll add another £280 (approx). igaroo.com

Verdict

PedalCell's power production is undoubtedly impressive. Its size and weight are the only real downsides.



Cycle's test promise

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Pros & cons

- + Roomy
- + Versatile
- Highly visible colour



Zastrugi

Vaquita 1-person tent

Lightweight expedition tent has room for your bags and won't break the bank

£149.99 planetx.co.uk, zastrugi.co.uk

While the central pole is easily installed, the end hoop is a struggle to fit, leaving the enclosing pocket's fabric worryingly taut. Reflective 1.8mm cord is used for the various guy lines. The inner tent is clipped to the inside at various points and, if used alone, requires the central pole only.

The outer's hexagonal plan leaves a big gap to the inner tent's opening side, creating a spacious 'vestibule' big enough to stash luggage without impeding access. The zip-closed flap can be secured with a pair of toggles. Various vents, pockets, openings and even an internal drying line complete a capable specification.

I left the inner tent behind on a recent tour, only saving some 320g since the groundsheet weighs 160g. Quick to pitch and take down, the Vaquita's outer tent provided impressively roomy shelter for just 1.3kg, including poles and aluminium pegs. ●

Richard Hallett

Verdict

With lots of space, excellent detailing and a versatile layout, the Vaquita is an impressive and affordable one-person tent eminently suitable for cycle camping.

Luxurious' may be a relative concept when cycle camping, but if it implies lightweight and yet spacious one-person accommodation with decent poor weather performance and attention to small details, then it's one that can be applied to Zastrugi's Vaquita expedition tent.

At under 1.8kg all-in, the Vaquita has a versatile design permitting the use of the mesh inner tent by itself in the right weather conditions. The outer tent or flysheet, used on its own, makes a roomy and effective shelter weighing little more than some bivouac tarps. Furthermore, the tent comes with an additional waterproof

'footprint' groundsheet that can be used as a lighter alternative to the inner tent or employed as a super-light tarp in its own right.

Styled on the classic tunnel format, with a central hoop and tension strap to support the centre, the tent has a pair of support struts at one end and, oddly, a U-shaped pole at the other. This, like the central pole, is collapsible; the aluminium sections are conveniently held together by an inner elastic cord. The resulting bundles are 400mm or less in length.

The shaped tips of both poles clip into aluminium eyelets stitched into the straps and fabric, with all aluminium parts finished to a high standard.

Other options

HILLEBERG AKTO
£610

Well proven, durable tunnel-style one-person tent with roomy vestibule. Weight: 1.7kg. hilleberg.com/en



DECATHLON FORCLAZ TREK 900
1-PERSON £109.99

Semi-freestanding dome tent with separate inner and flysheet. Weight: 1.3kg. decathlon.co.uk





Pros & cons

- + Classic looks
- + Easy attachment
- Asymmetric

Altura

Heritage Rack Pack

Stylish 7-litre bag made from durable waxed canvas. Unusual asymmetric design

£50 altura.co.uk



Shaped and styled along the lines of a traditional canvas handlebar bag or small saddlebag, Altura's Heritage Rack Pack is decidedly asymmetric. It fits on a rear pannier rack with its long axis aligned with the cycle's centre line, so what would be the back of a bar bag or front of a saddlebag is, therefore, positioned to one side of the machine with the top flap opening on the other. It's an unconventional arrangement, but get past it and the Heritage has a lot to offer.

Good looks, for starters. The old-school 12oz waxed canvas outer fabric may not suit every bike but its appearance of durability stands close inspection. The slightly pre-aged finish lends an air of gravitas, lessened only by the pale grey of the plastic buckles. The sides

– sorry, front and back – feature reflective bands, complete with attachment loops for clip-on lighting, and they're integrated nicely into the overall aesthetic. Darts in the top flap help it cover the otherwise exposed tops of the front and side edges.

Poke around and you'll find pockets: two on the outside, one with a keyring clip, accessed via sturdy zips, and a pair of document sleeves on the inside, up against the stiffener under the flap. The front and base are also stiffened, with the sides left flexible. The inside of the 7L capacity pack is lined with a pleasingly coordinated polyester fabric. Besides the buckles, external fittings include a carry-handle and attachment loops for the included shoulder strap and a Velcro strip at each corner for attachment to the rack. This works best if the rack

top is close in size to the rack's base, but there's enough spare in the system to accommodate a slightly wider or narrower rack top.

Strapped in place, the pack is secure but laterally flexible as the internal stiffeners are in separate panels with little mutual support. Matters improve if the pack is well-stuffed, and in any case there's no problem carrying, say, a couple of bottles of wine or a few tins of baked beans. Weight is a reasonable 740g, including shoulder strap. ●

Richard Hallett

Verdict

An attractive bag with useful detailing, the Heritage is made to last, with looks and durability that will be appreciated both on and off the bike.

Other options



TOPEAK MTX TRUNKBAG £57.99

Weather-resistant rack-top bag with loads of storage compartments, carry handle and shoulder strap, and quick-release mount. extrauk.co.uk



RESTRAP RANDO BAG SMALL £129.99

Generous 11L capacity, sturdy build, and Velcro flap closure. Innovative clip-on attachment for front or rear racks. restrap.co.uk