



Grouptest

Tubeless repair kits

Tubeless tyres aren't immune to punctures. To fix them you need not patches but plugs. **Hannah Collingridge** tests four repair kits



HANNAH COLLINGRIDGE

Hannah is a keen bikepacker and ex bike mechanic. Only one very old 26in Nobby Nic was harmed during this test – 26 ain't dead but this one is now full of plugged holes.

Tubeless tyre setups are great for reducing the number of punctures you have to deal with. Smaller holes caused by things like thorns and crumbs of glass usually self seal. If the hole is too large, however, the sealant will keep spraying out instead of hardening into a plug. That's when you need a tubeless repair kit.

A tubeless repair kit consists of some pre-glued strips (variously called plugs, worms or anchovies) and a device for shoving those plugs into holes in your tyres. There's quite often a means of roughening the sides of the hole as well to help the plug adhere.

All you do is clean the hole, jab the plug into it to seal it, and reinflate your tyre. Each manufacturer will have specific instructions, and quite often a video, about how to use their kit. Study this before you stick the repair kit in your bag and have to use it in anger; the instructions are usually on the box you've just binned.

Using a tubeless repair kit is faster and easier, in theory, than stripping the tyre off and putting your spare tube in. But you'll still need to carry a tube for those rare occasions when a plug won't work, because the hole is more of a gash.

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Storage
As with any on-the-go tools, lighter and more compact is better, other things being equal. Some tubeless repair kits can be stashed in the ends of a handlebar.

and sturdy enough for you to use easily even on cold and wet days. The shape of the fork on the tool determines how easy it is to get the sticky plug onto it, and whether you need to handle the plug before insertion.

2 Safety
How is the spiky end of the tool protected while not in use? The last thing you need is it poking a hole in your spare tube – or in you.

4 Plug size
Tyre plugs come in different sizes. Think about what size you're most likely to need for the riding you do. If in doubt, take at least two different widths. Most kits will allow you to stick more than one strip into a hole if required.

3 Ease of use
The handle of the tool that stabs into the tyre needs to be large



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