

Group test

BIKEPACKING SEATPACKS



DAVE ANDERSON
Cycling journalist

Big seatpacks add lightweight luggage capacity to any bike, on road or off. **Dave Anderson** of radventure.cc reviews four bags



ROLL-DOWN CLOSURE

Simple waterproof solution that allows easy access to the contents on or off the bike. Look for packs that integrate this into the stability strapping of the bag.

BUNGEE CORD TIE DOWNS

Useful for quick and easy stowage of spare clothing, waterproof layers, or short-term carrying of food shopping. Really useful on extended tours as a drying facility on sunny days.

DOUBLE VELCRO STRAPS

Provide a snug and secure seatpost fitting. Look for the least amount of overlap or the use of non-snagging velcro to prevent them catching on your shorts.

TRANSVERSE STRAPS

These fix the seatpack securely to the saddle rails and, cinched down, help increase the stability of the bag. Captive straps are good as they don't flap around, which can be annoying.

REFLECTIVE PANELS AND LOGOS

Side and rear reflectives are a bonus. They increase visibility when using the bag on the road without any weight penalty.

SEATPACKS are widely used by mountain bikers for bikepacking, both on full suspension frames and anywhere a streamlined approach to load-carrying will make tight singletrack easier to negotiate. Accompanied by a handlebar-mounted roll pack and a frame bag, there's scope to distribute a fair bit of kit around the bike without overly affecting handling.

Seatpacks on their own also offer considerable benefits to anyone looking for

a 'fast and light' approach to bike luggage, be it for credit card touring, gravel rides or commuting. (See bit.ly/cyclinguk-lessismore for ideas.) They also offer enough capacity for overnight trips and are a solution for any bike without pannier rack mounting options.

The first seatpacks available from American companies required separate drybags to ensure they were up to UK use, so it's good to report that manufacturers are now offering a range of waterproof products more suited to our climate.

Your thoughts?

WRITE TO US: Cycle Letters, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

EMAIL US: editor@cyclingsuk.org
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1 BLACKBURN OUTPOST SEATPACK

£74.99 ZYROFISHER.CO.UK

The Blackburn Outpost takes a different approach from the other bags here by combining a welded-seam, waterproof drybag with a separate cradle that attaches to the bike. This allows for extra protection from spray from the back wheel, though I noted some finer debris working its way into the space between the cradle and drybag, which needed to be wiped clear at the end of each ride. One advantage of this method is the ability to leave the cradle attached to the bike overnight, just removing the drybag when necessary. The drybag offers 11 litres of storage space. If you're packing the drybag before fitting it into the cradle, take care to allow enough wiggle room to fit it snugly into the cradle. Once the compression straps are tightened, the seatpack is reasonably stable in use. Webbing at the rear of the cradle allows rear light fitting. Weight: 478g.

1



VERDICT:
Tough and not expensive. Separate cradle can stay on bike

2



VERDICT:
Lightweight, well thought out, and waterproof, but this quality comes at a price

3



VERDICT:
A budget seatpack with decent features. Inner drybag adds weight

4



VERDICT:
Very sturdy waterproof bag. Works best if not filled to capacity


3 MADISON CARIBOU LARGE

£79.99 MADISON.CO.UK

The Caribou is a 12-litre pack that utilises both a water resistant outer and waterproof inner drybag, a design that comes with a slight weight penalty. The outer bag features a rubberised bottom panel to help deal with wheel spray, and reinforced side panels to aid rigidity. I found the soft top panel of the outer bag at the seatpost junction wetted out and retained moisture. A bungee cord tie-down allows a bit of extra stowage. The inner bag is an almost translucent yellow, which helps you find things inside. Being separate, it saves removing the whole seatpack from the bike, which can save embarrassment if you're credit card touring through muddy conditions. In use, the bag was easily cinched down and proved stable over rough ground. There are fixings for adding a rear light, while reflective panels aid visibility on the road. Weight: 583g.

4 ORTLIEB SEAT PACK

£110 ORTLIEB.COM

The Seat Pack marks Ortlieb's entry into the bikepacking market, but it's backed up by a five-year warranty and the company's considerable experience in cycle luggage. At 16 litres, it's the largest bag on test. The Seat Pack is robustly constructed and looks likely to shrug off years of hard use. Reflectives and light fixing points are available at multiple points of roll down, allowing flexibility when packing. A one-way vent allows easy compression. There's a handy bungee cord tie-down on the top of the bag. At full capacity, it's a bit of a behemoth and prone to sway on rougher ground. Compressed down, it regains stability, thanks in part to rigid panels on the side of the bag. Weight: 447g. 

2 APIDURA SADDLE PACK (MID-SIZE)

£126 APIDURA.COM

This is the mid-sized offering from Apidura, offering 14 litres of capacity (17L and 9L are also available). It's lightweight and nicely thought out, constructed from seam-welded, tough fabric, and vented so that you can squeeze the air out when you close it. The top of the bag features a bungee cord tie-down, which is surprisingly useful for mid-ride stowage of jackets or as a drying rack on longer tours. The arrangement of compression and transverse saddle straps makes it a very stable bag in use. The rigidity of the lower third of the bag, which comes into contact with the seatpost, helps with this. The velcro used on the two seatpost straps doesn't aggressively grab shorts material – a welcome addition. Two points are available for a rear light attachment. Weight: 352g.



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