

Kit reviews

GEAR

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

Compass
**NACHES
 PASS**
26×1.8"
TYRE £54
 svencycles.com

- PROS & CONS**
- + Incredibly fast and comfortable
 - + Tubeless-ready
 - Limited longevity
 - Fragile (esp. Extralight version)



OFFERED IN STANDARD and Extralight formats, weighing 350g and 300g respectively, the Naches Pass is one of a wide range of tyres from a US brand that has recently led the trend for exceptionally light, wider-section road – or, as Compass would put it, ‘allroad’ – tyres. The range includes tyres to fit 26-inch, 650B and 700C rims (ISO 559, 584 and 622).

Two decades ago, I commissioned an audax/touring bike built to take 26-inch mountain bike wheels, with the aim of investigating the benefits of wide, slick tyres. Theory said that the slicks should be faster-rolling than the 700x23C rubber almost universal on lightweight road bikes of the time, but the tyres then available proved too inflexible to roll as hoped and too heavy (at 550g) for group riding. Had a tyre like the Compass Naches Pass been available, the result would have been very different.

At 350g, even the Standard model is very light for a 44mm section tyre. This can only be achieved by using a very fine, supple casing and a thin tread cap, either slick or wearing a fine tread pattern. The construction of the Extralight is on a par with that of a 700C road race tyre weighing around 200g. The result is a fat tyre that exhibits the advantages over a narrow tyre of similar

construction expected in theory: superior comfort, rolling resistance, and grip. Experience with similar tyres from rival brand Grand Bois suggests that tread life will be significantly greater than on a narrow tyre. Fat tyres are, of course, much better suited to riding on unsurfaced or ‘gravel’ roads.

The downside to such lightweight rubber is its fragility, not only through vulnerability to puncture by flint or thorn, but insensitive handling such as skidding. Nevertheless, wide lightweight tyres perform well on rough roads where the main hazards are stones, ruts and potholes. Furthermore, the Naches Pass is tubeless-ready and can be used with sealant to minimise the likelihood of a puncture.

I tested the tyre with a Stan’s No Tubes kit (Cycle Feb-Mar 17). The tubeless-ready bead makes the tyre tight to fit but able to hold a greater pressure running tubeless than a regular tyre. In fact, the Naches Pass seated more easily with the Stan’s kit than with an innertube. Going tubeless saved 100g, as well as enhancing puncture protection.

The tyre’s theoretical benefits are entirely realised on the road, where the riding impression is plush, ridiculously zippy, and very reassuring thanks to the traditional fine herringbone tread pattern. Ace.

Richard Hallett

Review requests

Is there a product that you would like us to review?

WRITE TO: Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ **EMAIL:** cycle@jamespembroke media.co.uk

OTHER OPTIONS



1 VITTORIA RUBINO PRO SLICK 26×1.5" £22
 Slightly narrower and heavier at 385g. Should offer usefully enhanced durability.
vittoria.com



2 SCHWALBE KOJAK 26×2" £22
 Fast-rolling but weighty at 460g, the Kojak should suit laden road touring.
schwalbe.com



GORE ONE RESCUE GORE-TEX SHAKEDRY JACKET £220

goreapparel.co.uk

PROS & CONS

- + Outstandingly weatherproof
- + Very light and packable
- Eye-wateringly expensive



YES, IT'S A LOT of money for something that feels like a black bin bag. And if you let it go on a windy day, it'd be about as likely to end up flapping in a tree, for it weighs just 106g, the weight of a windproof gilet. This premium-priced jacket is anything but rubbish, however.

I've mostly been using it for off-road winter night-riding, where its ninja black colour is no handicap. Its first outing was notable for several intense showers of hail and near-freezing rain, and I've since worn it in temperatures below zero as well as in more clement rain. Mostly I've worn it over a base layer and a close-fitting stretchy windproof, a combination that seemed worryingly insubstantial when I stepped out of the door on a cold December night.

Yet it works exceptionally well. It's kept my top half completely dry, and hasn't once 'wetted out' in sustained rain. It's supremely breathable, so I haven't overheated either, instead remaining at that rare Goldilocks temperature for a winter ride: not too cold, not too hot. When you don't need it, it packs

down small enough for a jersey pocket, so it's an ideal just-in-case jacket for when the weather turns.

The fit is athletic, the medium fitting me (37in chest) fine. It's made from a taped-seam Gore-Tex laminate that's astonishingly thin, because it comprises just the waterproof Gore-Tex membrane itself, lined on the inside with a hair's breadth of polyamide fabric. Water beads and rolls off the outer membrane as from a water-repellant coating, and it doesn't soak in. You can, as the name says, shake the jacket dry. My main reservation about the ultralight fabric is: how easily will it tear? It hasn't done so, despite being used for mountain biking where tears are more likely, but it would prey on my mind if I'd spent £220 of my own money on it.

To be as light as it is, the jacket is necessarily minimalist. The front zip, which has a storm flap, is half length, so the jacket

goes on over your head, smock-style. Hem and cuffs are lightly elasticated and are not adjustable. There is a chest pocket, big enough for a phone but better suited to lighter items like your backdoor key (there's a loop). The test sample's pocket was only fixed on three sides internally, having seemingly become unglued on one edge. There's also close-fitting hood, which doesn't obscure vision and which will readily fit under a helmet. Finally, there are reflective logos on the arms, chest, and hem. A colour option other than black would be welcome nevertheless.

Machine washable at 40°. Weight: 106g (size M). Sizes: S-XXL. There's no women's version, although there is a non-hooded women's Gore Shakedry jacket for £220.

Dan Joyce

OTHER OPTIONS



1 LUSSO CLEAR CAPE £49.99

Not as weatherproof as the Gore, but the material is waterproof and breathable, the jacket packs down small, and it's affordable. lusso.bike



2 ENDURA FS260-PRO ADRENALINE RACE CAPE £77.99

Another translucent race cape, this taped-seam jacket is surprisingly waterproof and breathable, with some built-in stretch enhancing the athletic cut. endurasport.com



- PROS & CONS**
- + Sticky, sticky, sticky!
 - + Comfortable and durable
 - No webbed tongue



Five Ten FREERIDER ELEMENTS MTB SHOES £90

fiveten.com/uk

PRIOR TO BUYING these Five Tens, I'd tried Scarpa Approach shoes, boat shoes, and varying trainers on my flats. They'd all sort of worked, but soon suffered the fate of early retirement after not agreeing with my pedals' pins. After getting a refund for my Scarpas, which had fallen apart after three weeks in Iceland, I took the plunge with the Five Ten FreeRider Elements.

I'm a long-time user and fan of Five Ten's climbing shoes, which is where this US-based company's origins began in 1985. Among climbers, they're well-known and respected for their Stealth rubber. I wasn't aware they'd moved into mountain biking (apparently way back in 2000!), but on the basis of their climbing shoes, I felt confident the bike shoes would at least be 'sticky'.

My riding changed instantly. Feet no longer popped off the pedals when the going got bumpy, and short steep climbs that had previously eluded a successful ascent were mastered due to the firmer footing. In fact, they're so sticky that I've found I can't simply just move my foot on the pedal to find the right position, but actually have to lift it up and replace it!

They've a stiff sole, so they're good for

climbing, but it's not too stiff to affect their comfort levels when you're on your own two pins either.

In the late summer months, when it was dry and hot, I didn't suffer particularly from overheating, but it's been in the autumn and winter months where they've come into their own. The original Five Ten FreeRider, while equally sticky, is said to be a bit of a sponge in the wet. With the Elements, the leather upper is treated with a durable water-repellent coating, and there are synthetic panels. The design keeps out the damp and enables them to dry faster.

It would be misleading to say these will keep your feet 100% dry, as there's no webbing to the tongue, so going through deep water or prolonged rain will still lead to damp feet, but in the general rain you'll not suffer. If you're expecting rain, team them up with waterproof socks and you'll be laughing.

I've used these for all my recent off-road riding, from short nighttime blasts around the Surrey Hills to multi-day bikepacking trips on the South Downs Way. If I cleaned off the mud, they'd look as good as new. I can't recommend them enough.

Sam Jones

OTHER OPTIONS



1 FIVE TEN FREERIDER EPS £105

Designed for winter excursions, they're insulated with PrimaLoft and meant to be more waterproof than the Elements. A bit dear for one-season wear, but could be worth it for sufferers of cold feet. fiveten.com/uk



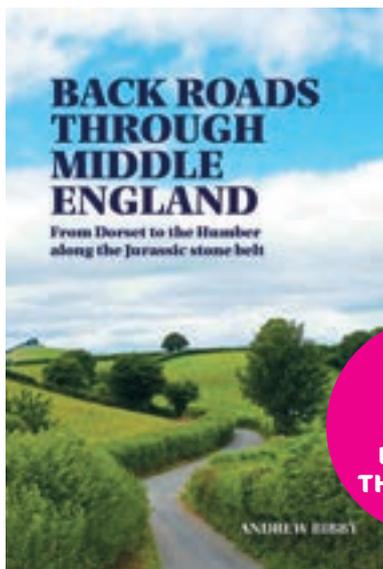
2 DVS REVIVAL 2 SKATE SHOES £52.95

These shoes are designed to stick to skateboards and will do so for flat pedals as well, but for the savings in price you'll sacrifice the potential of dry feet. skatehut.co.uk

Book reviews

BOOKS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS



Andrew Bibby

BACK ROADS THROUGH MIDDLE ENGLAND £13.95

gritstone.coop

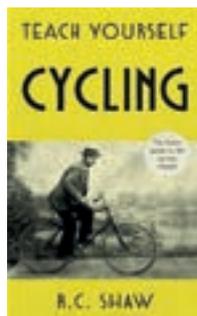
IF YOU ASKED your friends what route they'd recommend for an eight-day ride in the UK, pedalling the 430 miles from the Dorset coast to the Humber would probably not feature in their suggestions. That's one of the fascinating aspects of Andrew Bibby's journey to try to discover 'middle England'.

Following the line of the great belt of 'Cotswold' limestone through ten different counties, Bibby's challenge was not the distance travelled, but rather what he could learn along the way about the factors that shape the land.

Sometimes cycle travelogues can seem formulaic: the author went from here to there and this is what happened on the way. In contrast, this book is an exploration of landscape, nature, rural life, social history, identity, and change. The bicycle is merely the conduit that permits Bibby to slowly take in and enjoy the countryside and its characters.

Full of detail and well researched, it was, however, Bibby's hedgehog observation that struck a chord with me. He sees roadkill strewn over the back roads but not a single squashed hedgehog, leading to his conclusion that what we are told is true: hedgehogs are indeed a species in rapid decline.

Duncan Dollimore



RC Shaw

TEACH YOURSELF CYCLING £7.99

hodder.co.uk

IS IT POSSIBLE to teach yourself cycling? As a National Standard Instructor, I would say it's far better to learn from a person or a video than a book. This book is billed as 'the classic guide to life on two wheels' and was originally published in 1953. The language used reflects the times, with references to the trainee cyclist only ever being male, whilst the only female mentioned is a seamstress! The best thing about it is its collection of wonderful Frank Patterson drawings.

Julie Rand



Claire Beaumont, Ben Spurrier, et al

THE COMPLETE BIKE OWNER'S MANUAL £14.99

dk.com

AFTER GOING ON a Cycling UK bike maintenance course, I've been trying to learn more about how my bikes work. Tinkering only reveals so much, which is why I've found this book really helpful. The CGI cross-sections of mechanical parts (the insides too small to be shown in photos) are clear, and the text isn't patronising or confusing. A great book for both beginner and competent home mechanics.

Victoria Hazael



Peter Henshaw

CHOOSING, USING & MAINTAINING YOUR ELECTRIC BICYCLE £9.99

veloce.co.uk

WHAT I LIKE about this book is that it's written in plain English. It provides enough technical information for the average buyer but avoids jargon. All aspects of buying, using, and maintaining e-bikes are covered, including the law, types of bikes, retro-fit motors, and buying secondhand. Having worked in an electric bike shop, I can say that knowledgeable staff will have this information to hand, but good e-bikes aren't cheap so it's worth doing your homework first.

Roland Seber



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