

Group test

# RACK-FITTING REAR LIGHTS



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Seatpost lights are more common but rack-fitting ones are more convenient. **Richard Hallett** reviews four



**LIGHT OUTPUT**

Six candela, the minimum in this test, is subjectively enough from a rack-mount rear light. All the lights tested shine steadily with no flashing mode, perhaps due to road traffic regulations in the countries where they are commonplace.

**REFLECTOR**

An integral reflector, ideally marked with UK or EU regulations approval, means you don't need a separate one elsewhere. It's also a useful safety feature should the batteries run down.

**COMPATIBILITY**

Will it fit 50mm or 80mm mounts – or both? Does your rack have suitable mounting points? Style-wise, does it match the rack?

**BATTERIES**

Generally AAA or AA, usually two of them. Battery life is fair even with disposables. Easy access to the batteries need not mean insecure, although some sort of threaded fixture makes tampering harder.

**SWITCH OPERATION**

You'll need to turn on the light in the dark, possibly while wearing gloves, so a switch that's easy to locate and operate in such conditions is a bonus.

**WATER RESISTANCE**

While many bikes with a rear rack will also have full mudguards, the light still needs to be rainproof for year-round riding.

**I**F YOUR BIKE has a luggage rack, you may be able to fit a rear light in arguably the best place for it. Bolted to a rack, a rear light is at a suitable height, securely attached, and clear of any obstructions such as luggage. Not all racks have suitable mounting holes. The standard European fixing has two 5mm holes 50mm or 80mm apart; some, but not all, rack-mount lights can be altered to fit either format. If your bike's rack

lacks these fixings, you can buy (or possibly bodge) a suitable bracket.

There are other important advantages to a rack-mount rear light. They are less attractive than a clip-on light to casual thieves, and can be left on the bike for use when needed. And all those on test incorporate a large reflector. This feature usually bears EU or British Standard approval, which helps in keeping the user road legal.

**Road legal after dark**

Does your bike comply with UK lighting regulations? You can check online. Visit [cyclinguk.org/cyclists-library/regulations/lighting-regulations](http://cyclinguk.org/cyclists-library/regulations/lighting-regulations) for a list of requirements.

## 1 OXFORD ULTRATORCH

£8.99 OXFORDPRODUCTS.COM

It's big and can be seen through 270°, which is possibly the best thing that can be said about this light beyond the fact that it works. The five LEDs of the test sample flickered slightly in a not very reassuring manner. The lens incorporates a reflector but it lacks the approval marking you need to be compliant with the law.

Getting inside the lamp to fit two new AAA cells requires a small driver for the Phillips screw, which should deter casual tampering. Once inside, the contents are reminiscent of a mid-'80s Wonderlight, with long wires to thin, bent-wire battery contacts. The switch is a simple push button. The backplate contains hex-head fixing screw sockets at 80mm and 50mm spacings. To use the latter, holes must be drilled.

All in all, a budget product that works, but in a way that would have me checking it frequently while riding.

## 2 SPANNINGA ELIPS

£15 SPANNINGA.COM

The Elips is available in either dynamo- or battery-powered versions. The latter employs two AAA cells to put out an unmissable 13 candela from its six LEDs. Run time is quoted as 50 hours.

Marked K1320, the lens meets the requirements of a relevant German lighting regulation. It comprises a red central reflector and a clear perimeter strip with light refracting facets, which spread the light from the red LEDs over 320°. The whole light shows red when lit.

The main part of the light encloses the LEDs and circuit board within a chunky housing, leaving only the batteries visible in their pockets. Replacement is easy, with no risk of damage to delicate electronics. The switch has a crisp action, and the overall impression is of reassuring durability.

There are screw sockets at 50 and 80mm, but the screws were stuck fast in the latter.



**VERDICT:**  
Big, non-approved reflector, low-budget build



**VERDICT:**  
Impressive light output and build quality



**VERDICT:**  
Effective and convenient, if a little more complex



**VERDICT:**  
Neat looks, quality build, easy to use and fit

## 3 BUSCH & MÜLLER TOPLIGHT LINETEC

SENSO £33

AMBA-MARKETING.COM

Compliant with the relevant German road traffic regulations and with BS6102/2, which applies to reflectors, the Toplight LineTec Senso is as comprehensively functional as its lengthy name suggests.

The light boasts a couple of important features: the two high-power red LEDs in the LineTec light strip along the top are set apart to provide twin points of visibility and help following drivers gauge distance; and the SENSO system can be set to operate the light automatically in low-light conditions. This includes a standlight function.

An indicator LED shows selected mode – Continuous or Senso – and flashes rapidly as a low-battery indicator. There is no way to change the fixing screw spacing; the light is supplied to fit either 80mm or 50mm brackets, not both. The underslung battery compartment is secured with a Torx screw.

## 4 BOBBIN SOLO

£12 BOBBINBIKES.COM

While it's sold by Bobbin Bicycles, this is actually another Spanninga (the Solo). Despite packing only one red LED in its slim lighting bar, the Solo chucks out a decent six candela, while offering a run time of 100 hours. The Z reflector carries EU regulation approval markings and is part of a clear plastic moulding that carries the LED, circuit board, and twin AAA cells.

The moulded backplate contains a feature that could be more widely employed. Housed in an open slot, each fixing screw can be readily removed; there is a pair of slots for both 80mm and 50mm rack bracket mounts, so the lamp can be adapted to either format with minimal effort. 



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