

GEAR UP



FOLLOWME

£210

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden & Cycling Development Director Rob Fuller

Tandems are expensive, so most parents tow a trailer-cycle when their kids are old enough to pedal but too young to ride in traffic. But it's good if they can go solo on cycle paths, hence the popularity of tow-bar devices that hitch up the child's own bike – even though most of them are awful! They invariably couple to the seatpost and have loose pivots, so they wobble and often lean the child over at a crazy angle. Breakages are not uncommon.

The Swiss designed FollowMe is different. It couples to the rear axle like a Bob-Yak trailer – a tried and tested arrangement in which the trailer closely tracks the towing cycle. My colleague Rob Fuller and his daughter were the test team, and I supervised fitting to their bikes.

The FollowMe's special quick-release skewer replaced the one in Rob's rear wheel (other adaptors are available e.g. for hub-gears), longer nuts replaced the ones securing his daughter's front wheel, and a plastic block was attached to her down-tube – and that's all the permanent hardware. The crucial operation is adjusting the cradle for a snug fit around that wheel, which can be from 12 to 20 inches. But



Your child's bike detaches from the FollowMe in seconds, allowing them to ride solo and leaving the 4kg towing unit attached to your bike

the instructions were clear and the whole process was completed in about 30 minutes. After that, coupling and uncoupling the bikes takes seconds. The towing device weighs 4kg and can be detached just as quickly when the adult bike is used normally. When going solo during family rides it remains attached, and it's simply hitched up by a nylon strap to a rear carrier or seatpost.

Over to Rob: 'The FollowMe was a delight to use. It feels really stable, with none of the wobble and sideways drift that can be felt with other styles of tag-along. As the point of attachment is closer to the child's front wheel, it can run closer to the ground, giving them a more realistic and enjoyable riding experience – as the expression on our four-year old tester's face shows!

'In solo mode, the unit does noticeably add to the weight of the rear end of the adult bike, but the feel is no different from carrying luggage. Another advantage of this design is you can also use panniers whilst towing, or even carry another child in a rear childseat.'

So long as some kind of towbar can be had for 50 quid, most parents unfortunately will balk at £210. If safe and fun family cycling is worth that much to you, however, the FollowMe is an elegant solution.

cyclesense.co.uk, 01937 530303



GEIGERRIG RIG 700 HYDRATION PACK 11L

£84.99

Reviewed by Bike Club Officer Ross Adams

The standout feature of this pack is the pressurised flow system, allowing the user to take a drink without the need to suck. (You pump it beforehand with a rubber bulb.) This works: a steady spray of water runs continuously from the bite valve when open. It's not sufficient for cleaning your bike, despite the manufacturer's claims. The construction of the pack, particularly key areas such as seams, fastenings and zips, feels less robust than similarly priced packs, suggesting that your cash is going on a gimmick. The pack is very comfortable and fits well, however, and the bladder is easy to clean. There's 11L of storage, but it seemed less when the bladder was full.

geigerrig.com

SUBMIT A REVIEW

If you want to submit a review, write or email the editor – details on page 80 – for advice on how to go about it. Each one printed wins a Hi-Viz Hump Waterproof backpack cover, worth £24.99. For more about the Hump and other hi-viz items, contact Respro on 020 7721 7300 or see at respro.com



**WE ALSO LOOKED AT...
CYCLING BOOKS**

**CYCLING TRAFFIC FREE
LONDON £9.99**

Reviewed by CTC's Adam Coffman
This is the fourth book in the 'Cycling Traffic Free' series. It provides lots of interesting and enjoyable routes of varying lengths for inexperienced cyclists, those cycling with children, or someone who just doesn't feel like jousting with London's drivers. There are 25 routes that cover all parts of the capital, and each route has a detailed direction list. My only criticism is that the maps for each route are too small and are not practical to use on a ride. Full-page maps, and a ring-bound hinge for easy folding and viewing, would improve this book considerably.
ISBN 978-0-7110-3525-6

**ON YOUR BIKE: THE SURREY
HILLS £8.99**

Reviewed by CTC's Julie Rand
Living in the Surrey Hills, I expected this spiral-bound guide to cover the fantastic mountain bike trails in the area. In fact, it covers most of the county and is aimed at the leisure rider looking for easy rides of around 20 to 30 miles or so, using a mixture of quiet lanes, towpaths, and bridleways. Each route is well-described, although the maps could be better. If you always ride in the same places, a guide like this will tempt you to go further afield and discover interesting parts of the county that you might not have thought to explore.
ISBN 978 1 84674 232 3

**TOPEAK MONDOPACK XL
£39.99**

Reviewed by CTC Chief Executive Kevin Mayne
When I received this seatpack, it was squeezed in a bundle of test items from the editor and I was underwhelmed: how could this be considered extra large? I fitted it to the bike in couple of minutes and then I started to fill it. Tardis-like, it then came into its own. Two big MTB-style inner tubes, several tools and it still had room. The 30cm length meant that it easily accommodated a pump and various other bits, even without unzipping the extension section (which could have taken a small waterproof or lock). This will make an excellent alternative to a bar bag and is a lot more streamlined. It would also be useful for the mountain biker who doesn't want to carry everything in a backpack. You do need a lot of seat pin showing to fit it. Given its 2L capacity, it's good value.
extrauk.co.uk



**ALTURA NIGHT VISION EVO VEST
£34.99**

Reviewed by CTC Touring Officer Mark Waters
Who on earth wants a hi-viz vest in black? I suppose those fashion conscious commuters who don't like the day-glo look, and for whom black is the current colour of choice. There are lots of interestingly shaped reflective patches, plus a mount for an LED light on the back, so it will be visible enough in headlights. It's made of lightweight stretchy mesh, with a full zip at the front, and it's comfortable, airy and packs small. Note that it does not conform to EU high-viz jacket regulations. It's an attractive product but expensive. There is a yellow version too.
zyro.co.uk



**SAVE MONEY AT CTC SHOP
PAGES 2-3**
CTC members get 12% off list price – often more, as with this vest (as we went to press)



**WELDTITE
DIRTWASH
£6.99 (500ML)**

Reviewed by Bike Club Officer Frances Chaloner
This silicone polish comes in a spray can with simple instructions. Dirtwash sprays evenly and should be buffed up after 10 seconds with a clean cloth, after prepping the bike. I found it easier to apply in small sections. The results were impressive on both matt and gloss paintwork, leaving the frame clean and shiny (with no residue or white streaks) and with good water repelling qualities. Coverage and consistency were excellent, but braking surfaces should be protected whilst spraying. Dirtwash is both effective and economical, making it very good value. It does exactly what it says on the tin.
weldtite.co.uk





CATEYE INOU

£199.99

Reviewed by Clive Andrews

The CatEye Inou is a neat combination of GPS logger, video camera and automatic stills camera. With both handlebar and helmet brackets, but no viewfinder or monitor, there's an element of guesswork involved in positioning. You set the GPS to record, then choose between video, automatic photo, manual photo, or collect a combination of media as you ride.

After your ride, you remove a MicroSD card from the Inou's weatherproofed compartment and put it in your computer's card reader (not included). Using an application called InouSync, you download the data to your PC. You can also adjust the way the Inou operates.

You also create an account at InouAtlas.com, and link to a YouTube account. Once set-up – which involves a few niggles – it's then easy to upload a trip online. Plug in the card, launch the app, and click 'one-button upload' – though selective handling of data is possible.

For each route, a fully functioning Google Maps view is accompanied by a combination of embedded YouTube video files and a mapped stills slideshow. Routes are editable and can be set to be private or public, the latter shareable via Facebook or Twitter. The 640x480 video footage is without sound



You can put your logged route online, complete with embedded photographs and video. What the Inou needs is a viewfinder and/or warning beep to give you more control over the images you collect

and seems to divide into five minute clips. Recording quality, though not at the level of most dedicated cameras, is reasonable, with capable transition from sun to shade.

I would have liked a screen or viewfinder, a USB socket for download, a Vimeo (rather than YouTube) option, and a warning beep a few seconds before a photograph is automatically taken.

The Inou provides well-presented records of your adventures. But alongside dedicated helmet cameras and affordable GPS tracking apps for smartphones, it occupies a peculiar gap. With greater functionality or increased camera resolution, the Inou could become a really useful navigational or creative tool. As it is, it's a fun-to-use gadget.

zyro.co.uk. Available from CTC Shop at £175.99



INCREDISOCKS

£10.75

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

The claims for these bamboo fibre socks did indeed sound incredible; better circulation, odour reduction, temperature regulation, pain reduction, increased range of motion, and more. They're just socks! Comfortable socks, sure, but I couldn't tell the difference between these and any other decent sports socks – such as Tudor Sports' Coolmax ones. If you have problems with your feet and you've tried different shoes (Specialized's footbeds are good), it's worth giving these a shot. At worst, you'll have some nice, comfortable socks. Sizes: Medium (men's 7-9.5, women's 7.5-10), Large (men's 9.5-12.5, women's 10-13). Below-ankle socks also available.

incredewear.com



VK TANDEM PYJAMAS

£38 APPROX

Reviewed by CTC Member Tim Hoyle

Taking our tandem with us for a six-week winter break meant leaving it outside unprotected. The Tandem Pyjamas cover consists of two rectangular sheets of woven polyester material, bound along one long side and two short sides. Three pairs of eyelets are provided on the bottom so that the pyjamas can be laced to the tandem to fix it in place. These 'pyjamas' are hardly elegant, but they did cover and protect our tandem. A wider panel along the top would accommodate the width of the handlebars better; ours shows signs of wear at the bar ends where it had been chafed by the wind. The pyjamas and the cord can easily pick up oil from the chain too. As a temporary cover, however, it works well.

From JD Tandems (tandems.co.uk) and others