

GEAR UP

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REVIEW

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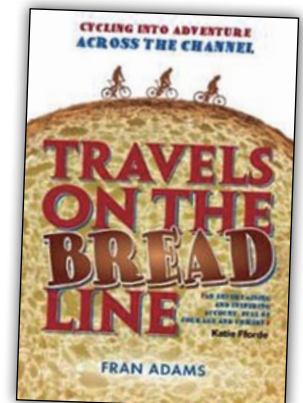


TRAVELS ON THE BREAD LINE

£12.99

Reviewed by Seamus Kelly

Travels on the Bread Line is a story of a mum (Fran Adams) who headed across the Channel for a cycle-camping holiday with basic equipment and little money. She took her teenage boys and one of their friends. The reader is guided through their life-changing adventures and misadventures in Brittany in 1987 and their second trip in 1988. Written in clear and simple language, this book is an easy and enjoyable read. The book isn't about bikes but the freedom, challenges and enjoyment of cycling. It's sure to appeal to people like me who remember when you could cycle without Lycra, mobile phones or GPS. memoirspublishing.com



RACE FACE NARROW WIDE 30T CHAINRING

£49.95

Reviewed by Dan Joyce

Most single chainring set-ups on mountain bikes use a chain device to prevent derailment. With their XX1 groupset, Sram showed that alternately-spaced thick and thin chainring teeth would mesh more tightly with the chain and stop it falling off – at least when used with a 'clutch' rear derailleur, which tensions the chain better as it doesn't jerk about over bumps. But XX1 is expensive and you can't just pick and choose components from it; for one thing, the rings have a 76mm bolt-circle diameter (BCD).

Race Face are one of a number of companies producing narrow/wide chainrings with a 104mm BCD, the mountain bike middle/outer standard. This 30-tooth version (32, 34,

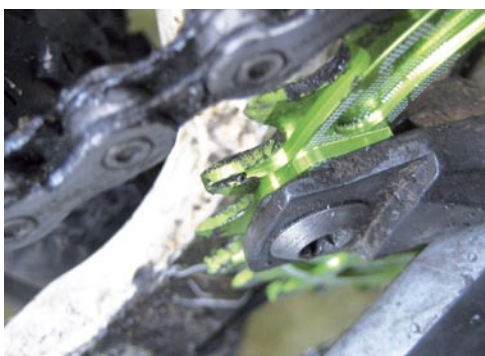
36 and 38 are available) makes a single ring easier work off-road. With the 11-36 cassette on my Whyte M109, it yields a gear range of 24-79 inches. I can pedal that at 5-25mph at fairly sensible cadences – and a bit either side at less sensible cadences. Having lost a shifter, derailleur, two chainrings, a cable and some chain, the bike is half a kilo lighter.

This 30T 104mm BCD ring is possible because Race Face have offset the chainring: it's spaced out a few millimetres where the ring bolts to the spider, to give clearance for the chain. This extra thickness of aluminium is threaded so there's no need for shorter, single-chainring bolts and inserts; you can likely re-use your existing chainring bolts.

Having used various chain retention devices in the past, I half expected to drop the chain on the first bumpy descent without one. It hasn't fallen off once. The bike's SLX clutch derailleur surely helps, but you might get away with using a standard derailleur. Gear shifting is simple and reliable, with none of the hesitancy or hang-ups you get with a mud-covered front mech.

The Narrow Wide chainrings are compatible with 9, 10 and 11-speed chains and come in a variety of bright colours if you don't fancy black. The 32 and 34 options are £5 cheaper.

raceface.com & silverfish-uk.com

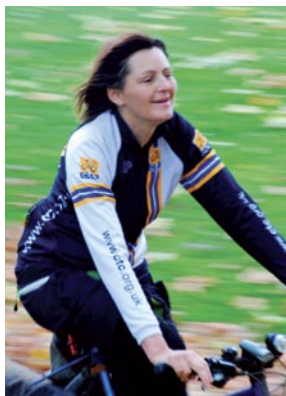


CTC PERFORMANCE LIGHTWEIGHT TRAINING JACKET

£66

Reviewed by Julie Rand
This CTC-branded long-sleeved top by Impsport is perfect for cooler rides, either over a short-sleeved jersey or, on very chilly days, as another layer under a jacket. It has the usual back pockets and a full-length zip, which keeps your neck warm and also allows for ventilation when you heat up. The zip also makes it easier to put on and take off

during a ride, especially if you are wearing a helmet. Made of 100% polyester, the top washes well and dries out easily but the white, though good for visibility, will probably not stay pristine for long. I tried out the size 12 and found the sleeves a bit short, so if like me you have long arms, perhaps order the next size up. Sizes: ladies' 6-18, men's XS-XXXL. impsport.com



BIOLOGIC FIXKIT

£29.99

Reviewed by Chris Juden
The FixKit packs 20 tools into a 14mm slim, credit-card sized (40x77mm) unit weighing only 158g. There's something to fit almost every common fastener on a bike, from 2mm socket screw to 15mm axle nut and pedal flats – fit, but not necessarily turn. You can nevertheless rotate the biggest spanner and slot it back into the tool to add leverage and use the FixKit's neoprene pouch for palm protection! The width of FixKit restricts use of its small, short bits in tight corners. And I found the 4mm bit (at 4.05mm) needed fiddling before it would enter some sockets. So check that anything you may want to turn can be turned before relying upon it. With these provisos – which apply to all mini-tools – the ingenious FixKit is one of the most versatile, compact and lightweight tools of this type. paligap.cc

REVOLIGHTS

\$229 plus \$60 p&p

Reviewed by CTC member Raul Ramirez
Revolights create an arc of illumination at the front of your front wheel and rear of your rear wheel, visible from all angles. The light units secure to the bike's rims with an array of small

grippers and would be hard to steal off the bike. They're well sealed and don't obstruct your brakes. They're expensive but I love them. Many other commuters ask me about them.

Dan Joyce adds: Revolights comprise two sets of LED lights that fit to the rims. A Li-ion battery fits to each hub, with cabling down the spokes. The LEDs only illuminate when pointing forward (white) or backward (red). A frame magnet and accelerometer determine when the lights get switched on. They add about 350g to each wheel. At current exchange rates, the price is about £180. revolights.com



BIKECONSOLE IPHONE 4 BIKE MOUNT

£29.95

Reviewed by Adam Coffman
A handlebar mount enables you to use your smartphone for navigation. This one is for the iPhone 4 or 4s. The case is weatherproof but not submersible, unlike the one for the iPhone 5. (HTC and Samsung versions are available too.) It clips tightly into its handlebar mount, and there's a silicone band too, which might prevent opportunistic thefts when you pause at traffic lights.

The mount was awkward to install but felt very secure once on. The phone's touchscreen works perfectly inside the case, and the case is definitely showerproof. You can swivel

the phone to view it in either landscape or portrait mode. You can feed a charging cable through, for an external battery carried on your bike or for home-charging. There is also a model for £10 extra with a built-in battery to boost your phone's running time. Overall, good value and it works well. cyclewiz.co.uk



BAM MEN'S BAMBOO RAGLAN BASELAYER

£32



Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce
Bamboo clothing makes me think of lampshade samurai hats. I was surprised how soft processed bamboo yarn is when it's mixed with cotton and elastane (28% and 4%). There's no itchiness and it breathes and insulates well. There are thumb loops in the arms, so you don't get any exposed flesh between gloves and cuffs.

The cut is described as snug, although in cycling terms it's on the large side; I fitted the small easily. I wore it in rotation with a range of base layers throughout the winter and it was better than any of them – tougher than merino wool, not as odorous as polyester, and not clammy like pure cotton. It's machine washable. Sizes: men's S-XXL, women's 8-16. bambooclothing.co.uk



MAGNIC LIGHTS

£191.26 set

Reviewed by Chris Juden

By holding a very strong magnet close to a moving wheel rim, Magnic lights exploit the power of a magnet to induce eddy currents in a nearby conductor. Those eddy currents in the rim make their own magnetic field, to oppose the movement, which in turn induces a current in wires positioned beside the magnet in each Magnic unit. It's like a linear induction motor, reverse-engineered as a generator.

The back-induced current isn't very powerful, but it doesn't take many watts to produce a useful number of lumens from the latest LEDs. Magnic claim 150 lumens total from the front pair, which weigh only 150g including brackets, plus another 75g for the single rear unit. That's lightweight lighting by any standards, but battery-free, with no moving parts, no wires, no friction? There is nevertheless a *little* magnetic drag (first law of thermodynamics: yer don't get owt fer nowt!). It's imperceptible when riding but enough to reduce by one third the number of times the wheel turns when one spins it.

Set-up is crucial, with light output much more sensitive to air-gap than speed and no noticeable increase above 20mph

unless one applies the brakes, to which the lamps are attached. Magnic make a rear brake-light virtue of this necessity, but I'd rather have the alternative fixed double adapter and the brightest possible headlights all of the time. I nevertheless appreciated extra light when cautiously descending unfamiliar and very steep lanes. By adjusting the lamps so their magnets cleared by a hair's breadth with the brakes hard on, and by tightening the cables so they weren't much further away with brakes off, I got just enough light to ride by. It was subjectively equivalent to a pre-halogen dynamo lamp and likewise goes out at very low speed. When not required, the lamps release (reluctantly) from their adapters and pop into little storage pods to keep the strong magnets from damaging other devices. Individual lamps, adapters and sets for other types of brakes are also available.

It's not great lighting by today's standards, but weight is minimal, they're very cute, and it's almost magic how simply moving the rim brings them to life. Ultimately, a far better hub dynamo system can be had for the money.

magniclight.com, UK importer Sonic Cycles (co.uk or tel: 0207 243 2848)

REDWOOD CYCLEMATE

£30 plus £4.95 p&p

Reviewed by Seamus Kelly

The Redwood Cyclemate is a maintenance stand that attaches to a workbench, supporting the bike upside down with a post inserted into the seat tube. Removing the seatpost from the bike before placing it upside down onto the stand is inconvenient, but once you've got it in place the bike is at a comfortable height and can easily be turned around to access different parts.

I found the Cyclemate particularly useful when working on my cable actuated disc brakes, being able to see the gaps between the discs and pads more easily, and for working on the drivetrain. Most adjustments, including gears, can be made with the bike upside down with no adverse effects. The stand is machined from aluminium, is lightweight, and takes up very little space when not in use. It looks good value for anyone who already has a Workmate-style workbench.

redwoodhire.co.uk

