

Group test


LACE-UP SHOES



RICHARD HALLETT
Technical Editor

Cycling shoes don't have to be lurid and fastened by Velcro and ratchets. Technical Editor **Richard Hallett** reviews four alternatives

ON OR OFF THE bike, laces are ace. Their sole significant disadvantage for cycling is the difficulty of tightening them while riding, which is irrelevant outside competition. Laces are light, reliable, easily replaced once worn, and provide a snug, evenly-tensioned fit over a wide area of the foot. The loops must be kept away from potential snags but otherwise they arguably outperform Velcro straps and the complex mechanical closures provided on many top-end competition shoes.

As with sportier cycling shoes, however, sizing can vary between brands. I asked for samples in Euro size 45. Three of them proved a fair match while the Exustar shoes were a little too big, suggesting that a size 44 Stelvio would have been a better fit. 

SIDE REINFORCEMENT

Shoes designed for use with clips and straps should have reinforcing panels to prevent wear from the clips and spread the pressure on the side of the foot.

TOE-CLIP CLEARANCE

Shoes used with toe clips may press the toes painfully against the clips. One solution is to extend the front of the shoe to keep the big toe away from the clip.

SOLE

Some take cleats, some don't. Those that do either accept protruding road-style cleats or recessed MTB-style cleats, which are better for walking on.

HEEL

A stiff heel counter is useful when trying to exit a clipless pedal by twisting the shoe outwards, but is not vital on shoes used with clips and straps. A little heel elevation helps with walking.

Your thoughts?

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FOOTBED

This may be contoured to provide support for the arch of the foot. Check that any such footbed is comfortable. Aftermarket footbeds are available.

LACE LENGTH

Laces should be long enough to be tied easily once snugged over the foot, but not so long that they leave excessively long loops.



1 GIRO REPUBLIC LX REFLECTIVE

£134.99 GIRO.COM

Giro offers several shoes with lace closure including the Empire, which takes road pedal cleats, and the Republic, which takes MTB ones. There are three versions of the Republic, one of which has a full-leather upper of undoubted retro appeal. The LX Reflective version's coated upper provides excellent visibility at night. The shoe shares the regular Republic's super-stiff Nylon outsole, replaceable walking pads and outsole scuff guard. With a rigid heel counter, generous toe box and well-proportioned last, the Republic is something of a performance shoe and could be used for competition, but is less than ideal off the bike where the sole's stiffness hampers walking. The moulded EVA footbed offers what Giro term 'medium' arch support. I didn't care for the sensation and ditched it. The LX employs perforated microfibre for the upper and tongue; it's stiff from new and needs a few miles to soften up. The tongue is long and its edge pressed against the front of my ankle until a quick trim sorted the problem. The tongue sports a neat elasticated tuck for the laces and, overall, the shoes have the looks and feel of well-made, high-end contemporary racing shoes, but with a more versatile sole. **EURO SIZES:** 36-50

2 EXUSTAR STELVIO E-SP705

£79.99 EXUSTAR.CO.UK

Looking more like a work boot than a cycling shoe, Exustar's Stelvio would be worthy of consideration for a round-the-world ride thanks to its sturdy PU-coated leather upper, and an outsole that contrives to be stiff enough for serious cycling and yet comfortable enough for walking. The sole is thick enough to deter most cyclists looking for a shoe for use with toe clips, but since it takes MTB-style cleats, there's no obvious need. Ignore the decoration on the rear side panels and here is a well-thought-out, well-made and durable shoe with few pretensions. Try before buying; my size 45 sample felt more like a 46. **EURO SIZES:** 37-48



1

VERDICT:
Feels like a racing shoe, but with a more versatile sole

2

VERDICT:
A practical shoe that does everything that could be asked of it

3

VERDICT:
Classic looks, retro performance

4

VERDICT:
If Yves Saint Laurent made cycling shoes...

3 ARTURO CYCLE SHOE

£74.95

RUFFLANDER.CO.UK

Buyers are advised by Arturo to send an outline of their foot with the order to ensure they receive the right size. As with the Reynolds Men's Classic, albeit to a lesser extent, these have a low, narrow toe that gives the big toe little space. It is likely that, with use, this would improve as the leather gives. The fit is otherwise excellent. The tongue, unpadded and not needing it, is just the right length, the heel snug, and the width across the forefoot generous. There are reinforcing panels to protect against toe strap rub. The thermoplastic rubber sole is smooth, allowing the foot to find a comfortable alignment without restriction. The low heel is just right for wandering around rural churchyards etc. With looks that have stood the test of time, this shoe epitomises old-school cycle touring. But the laces are too long. **UK SIZES:** 3-13 (Euro 36-47.5)

4 REYNOLDS MEN'S CLASSIC ROAD

£149

REYNOLDS-ENGLAND.COM

Arguably the best-looking shoe on test, the Classic Road shares with the Arturos a very flat and almost pointed toe. This provides a very small toe-box, and even on a short ride without toe clips my big toes were subjected to painful pressure. The rest of the shoe proved a perfect fit. The shoes are beautifully-made, with a soft, yet sturdy, full-grain leather upper, a resin-reinforced leather sole with low heel and rubber half-sole overlay to grip the pedal and, in this case, contrast stitching. Matching laces are provided along with black ones. The tongue is partly padded and there's a rolled edge around the upper. With a properly proportioned toe box, these shoes would be near-perfect for tooling around in style. Try a size bigger and you may get lucky with overall fit. **UK SIZES:** 4-13



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