

# Reviews

# Gear up

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

## Put to the test

Is there a product that you think needs reviewing?

Write to: *Cycle*, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

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**Bythlon**

## Pedal System

Clipless pedal that should eliminate foot-stuck falls

£129 [bythlon.com](http://bythlon.com)

**T**he Bythlon Pedal System is aimed at cyclists looking to move on from flat pedals but anxious about releasing their feet from 'clipless' pedals or pedals with toe-clips and straps. The pedals have a moulded body that houses a high-quality steel axle and sealed bearings, while the cleats fit to three-bolt road cycling shoes.

The body of each pedal is symmetrical and the same shape on both sides, with curved slots front and rear that accept similarly shaped bars on the

underside of the cleat. Once the cleat bars are located in the pedal, the cleat (and shoe) can easily be lifted free but is prevented from sliding off the pedal. The cleat's wider front bar is slightly narrower than the pedal slots, allowing the cleat a few degrees of rotation.

I'm used to clipless pedals, so assessing the system's performance is tricky. The heel-twist-outwards exit movement does not work with Bythlon cleats, which must be lifted upwards to disengage. 'Clipping in' took

### Pros & cons

- + Easier release than other pedals
- Needs 3-bolt road shoes
- Poor walking



a couple of attempts as there's no lip to catch with the front of the cleat. Once the cleat is engaged, the system proves impressively secure unless you pull up on the upstroke, at which point you lift your foot off the pedal. As such, I did not feel confident riding out of the saddle.

The system requires 'road' cycling shoes. Although soft polymer tips on the cleat bars provide some security when walking, the cleats are tall enough to make the process as fraught as with other road cleats.

The pedals themselves are convex fore-and-aft and this, plus their low-friction material, makes them poorly suited for use with regular shoes. Perhaps Bythlon missed a trick: provided with a level, serrated surface this would be a dual-purpose design rather than an easier-to-use but less secure alternative to fully clipless pedals. ●

**Richard Hallett**

## Other options



### MKS ESPRIT ROAD PEDAL £34.99

Elegant and versatile aluminium pedal suitable for use with or without clips and straps.

[mkspedal.com](http://mkspedal.com)



### RESTRAP PEDAL STRAPS £29.99

Diagonally-mounted straps (horizontal also available) fitted to flat pedals to retain the feet while allowing easy exit.

[restrap.com](http://restrap.com)

## Verdict

*Slip-free pedalling without being locked in, the Bythlon system is hampered by hard-to-walk-in cleats and pedals that aren't also suitable for regular shoes.*



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**Pros & cons**

- + Secure fit on suspension forks
- + Good quality
- Bit spendy



**Ortlieb**  
**Fork Pack**

Waterproof fork bags that go on and off like panniers

£50 each, [ortlieb.com](http://ortlieb.com)

Ortlieb's fork pack is a 4.1-litre waterproof, roll-top bag with a hard nylon plate on the back that attaches to an adapter fastened to your fork. This gives you an easy way to take the bag on and off, a bit like a pannier and rack, and also means the bag stands proud of the fork so there should be no rubbing. The plate gives the bag shape when it's not full, and this keeps things more stable.

The bags are designed so you can fit them to: forks with three M5 fixing mounts; forks with one M5 mount, also using metal bands (supplied); or forks with a constant diameter, such as suspension forks, using only the metal bands. You cannot use

them on carbon forks without M5 mounts, nor can you use them on curved forks. Because of the size of the bag, it must be fitted facing directly outward from the fork, perpendicular to the wheel.

Fixing them to a fork with M5 mounts is very simple: bolt the adapter in place, attach the bag, and ride. It's a fiddlier job to fit the adapter to a suspension fork using the metal bands. You may feel the bands are not going to be tight enough to hold the bag. But once everything is bolted in place, they are secure. I haven't been able to budge them while riding, even on trails rougher than those I'd normally use when bikepacking. A crash didn't move them either.

The quality of the bags is what

you'd expect from Ortlieb. They are classed as waterproof and have a thoughtful reflective detail on the front and back of each pack. The roll-top closure buckles are good quality, and the system that locks the pack to the adapter has a satisfying click when it locks into place. That quality is, of course, reflected in the price of £50 per bag, which is in line with the rest of Ortlieb's bikepacking range.

The bags have a weight limit of 3kg each according to Ortlieb, and they're big enough that you can easily fit a JetBoil-size stove inside. Hard luggage such as stoves will rattle against the nylon plate, however, so pack carefully. ●

**Hannah Collingridge**

**Verdict**

*A quality waterproof bag with an innovative means of attaching it to a suspension fork. Much more robust in use than I was expecting. I'm impressed.*

**Other options**

**TOPEAK VERSACAGE £24.99**

A luggage cage that fits 20-60mm diameter fork legs or frame tubes with or without threaded mounts. Bag not supplied. [topeak.com](http://topeak.com)



**PASSPORT LUG-KAGE FORK RACK £22.99**

Fork cage similar to Salsa's Anything Cage, specifically for forks with triple mounts. Includes straps but no bag. [ison-distribution.com](http://ison-distribution.com)



**Pros & cons**

- + Highly visible
- + Well made
- FAQ says "avoid heavy rain"

## Vizirider LED Cycling Gilet

A gilet lit up with white front and red rear LEDs

£65, [vizirider.co.uk](http://vizirider.co.uk)



### Other options



**ALTURA  
NIGHTVISION VEST  
£19.99**

Traditional hi-viz reflective vest that's available in sizes XS-XL. Fit is relaxed as it's designed to go over anything else you'd wear on a bike.

[altura.co.uk](http://altura.co.uk)



**ENDURA HUMVEE  
GILET £39.99**

Close-fitting windproof gilet with reflective detailing that you can stash in a cycling jersey pocket. Hi-viz yellow or black, in sizes S-XXL.

[endurasport.com](http://endurasport.com)

There are lots of gilets with reflective stripes or patches to help make you more visible on the road. Vizirider's has lighting as well. Available in red or yellow as well as the blue pictured, the LED Cycling Gilet is wind and rain resistant. The polyester fabric feels good quality – more like that of a mid-range waterproof – and is well stitched, with a mesh inner liner and three external pockets.

There's reflective piping on the front, back, hem and arm holes to help it stand out in car headlights from any angle. Then there are the embedded LEDs. In the off position, these are fairly inconspicuous; they look like buttons or studs. Turned on, their brightness surprised me.

I was very comfortable wearing this in an urban environment. Once I got over the initial feeling of conspicuousness, like I was cycling home from a warehouse party in the late 1990s, I began to

feel a sense of security in being lit up. I was particularly pleased with the red lights at the back of the gilet, which I'm sure made me more visible to traffic behind than just the lights on my bike and child trailer.

My partner and I live in rural Scotland and have a sizeable commute on country roads to and from the nursery school. Being seen from a distance on such roads is important. As we received two gilets for testing and often ride together, we were able to get a sense of how the gilet would appear to other road users. Even around town, with more things competing for attention, the gilet's LEDs really helped me pick out my partner as a cyclist in traffic.

There are three modes for the lights: constant, with a duration of up to 10 hours per charge; slow flash (14 hours); and fast flash (20 hours). The flashing modes make for very high visibility.

The LEDs are powered by a small battery pack that detaches easily for charging via micro-USB. I wasn't sure whether the battery connector and other electrics in the jacket would withstand the washing machine, but I was told by the manufacturer that (with the battery pack removed) the gilet will withstand a 30° or cooler wash.

It's available in sizes S-XL. The medium I tested had a snug fit so if you plan to wear lots of layers in winter, I recommend sizing up. **Rhyddian Knight**

### Verdict

*I liked it. With the LEDs switched off, this looks like a normal cycling gilet. With them switched on, it provides more visibility at night than cycle lights alone.*