



Alpinestars Tech-Air 5 £699.99

‘Like 18 back protectors’



Tested by Michael Neeves for five years

Comfort, reliability and above all, cost

are perhaps the biggest barriers to wearing an airbag system. Alpinestars' Tech-Air 5 airbag vest isn't cheap, that's for sure, but for the protection it'll give your back, shoulders, chest, ribs and collar bones in a crash, it's worth every penny. The Italian firm claim an airbag decreases the force of an impact by up to 93% compared to regular body armour... or the equivalent of wearing 18 CE Level 1 back protectors. The Tech-Air 5 slips on in seconds and never feels bulky or uncomfortable under a jacket, although it can be hot in the summer. You get some ventilation through the fabric vest, but none through the plastic airbag itself, for obvious reasons. It's been 100% reliable for the past five years and over 10,000 miles I've been using it. Battery life is still superb and lasts a good couple of full days' riding, or a few weeks' worth of sporadic trips. There is connectivity via an app and you can select Street or Race modes, the latter being track-only. Sizes are XS-4XL. And it still looks as good as new with little sign of wear.

MCN rating ★★★★★
www.alpinestars.co.uk

Ready to go off at the first sign of trouble!



10k miles ON TEST

Leatt ADV HydraDri 7.5 £259

‘They don't fall short...’



Tested by Richard Newland for four months

If you want the

protection, rugged aesthetic and benefits of a proper adventure boot but don't want the full-height shin protection and bulk, these shorties could be for you.

Don't be too fooled by their 'Short' designation, though – they're not ankle boots, and do extend about as high as a normal sports boot, so you've still getting a decent amount of protection. They rate as CE Level 2 for height and impact cut and transverse rigidity, while they're rated at the more basic Level 1 for abrasion resistance. It's a solid level of certified protection for any boot, let alone a shortie.

Available in black or brown, the upper is Nubuck, while you get rugged and well-designed aluminium buckles that are effortless to use (big enough for leverage, but they don't catch on everything you try to walk past) coupled with their 'SlideLock' top closure (a bit like Velcro). There's a useful ankle brace to give additional support, and a thick and supportive chunky sole that works well on and off the bike. It's a pretty stiff footbed that includes steel shank reinforcement, but the



Rugged buckles, protection and comfort without all the bulk

boot boasts trainer-level comfort around your foot, and the sole shape – which rises at the toes – makes walking easy.

I've ridden in heavy rain and suffered no water ingress, backing up their waterproof claims – but on hot days the breathability isn't quite as impressive. If you are planning on walking around a fair bit, they do take a bit of time to break in, and the top of the boot can dig into your shins a little – but this is never an issue when you are on the bike.

The aluminium clasps are lovely to use and feel quality, while I did have a failure of one of the plastic sliding closure straps. I'm not aware of it having suffered any impacts that would have inspired its demise – and have had no hint of a problem with the other straps, or its replacement. Otherwise, there are zero real signs of wear after 2250 miles in all weathers, and a lot of stomping about.

Comfortable, attractive, durable, waterproof and protective – they appear to be typical of Leatt's high production standards.

MCN rating ★★★★★
moto.leatt.uk

2250 miles ON TEST

Merlin Torsten £399.99

‘Uncanny cooling’



Tested by Ben Clarke for 12 months/1000 miles

I'm a sucker for a

quirky product (I've tested inflatable thermals, a 'windscreen wiper' for your visor and a helmet heads-up display in my time at MCN) so when I saw that Merlin had a UV ray-reflecting retro jacket that promised to keep you cool in hot weather, I had to try one.

I actually took delivery last year, but since I only pull the Torsten out of the wardrobe in seriously hot conditions and I live in England, it's taken this long to build a meaningful testing mileage.

It feels counter-intuitive to be pulling on a suede-effect leather jacket to stay cool – I would normally be reaching for an urban-style cotton

So cool it's like magic



12 months ON TEST

jacket, mesh option or perforated leathers. It's a very odd feeling to be rolling along in hot sun wearing a black, AAA-certified, retro leather outfit and be cool as a cucumber, but it genuinely works. The reflective treatment, coupled with the excellent ventilation, makes for a

ride so comfortable that there's no need to opt for anything lighter.

Best of all, you can zip in the thermal layer and use it out of the hottest season as a normal, retro leather garment.

MCN rating ★★★★★
www.merlinbikegear.shop

Go on, hug a hoodie



Six months ON TEST

Roadskin Ladies Armoured Hoodie £149

‘This Hoodie's a goodie’



Tested by Ali Silcox for six months

Not my usual style but this hooded jacket

offers excellent comfort and quality at £149. Made with stretch fabric and a breathable lining, it features CE Level 2 armour at shoulders, elbows, and back, plus an overall AA rating. I especially like the jacket's extended storm cuffs with thumb holes, elasticated cuff at

the hips, along with the combination of external and internal zipped pockets, plus I'm glad the hood is removable. There is a waterproof membrane which provides shower protection and on these hotter days the jacket does get warm, as there's no ventilation. In my experience, it's good for three-season riding and it looks cool off the bike too.

MCN rating ★★★★★
www.roadskin.co.uk