

# TRIED & TESTED

MCN STAFF RATE THEIR RIDING KIT

★★★★★



Not uncomfortable or restrictive, even in full leathers

Looks odd on its own, but is incredibly effective

8 months ON TEST

Alpinestars Tech-Air 5 Plasma £699.99

# 'An incredible bit of riding kit'



**Tested by Carl Stevens for 3000 miles**

Airbags are absolutely exceptional. Before they hit the mainstream, I would feel a bit naked without wearing a back protector, but now I find it almost inconceivable to ride without an airbag no matter what the outing – and the Tech-Air 5 Plasma is the best, most complete airbag I've sampled so far.

First up, it not only fits well by sitting tight across the shoulders and chest without being restrictive, but the Tech-Air 5 Plasma is pleasingly light at just over 1.5kg. It's barely noticeable on thanks to a slim design, and unlike so many offerings on the market, it incorporates a selection of gaps to allow a little bit of airflow. This is an absolute godsend on warmer days – unlike standard protectors, airbags by their very nature can't be breathable or perforated. The protector even fits well under a leather suit, although a little nudge to pull the CE Level 1 back protector down is a must before each ride.

It's quick and easy to arm with the zip closure system, and the best part is that it can cycle through different software settings to suit various riding situations; there are three options, covering Street, Off-road and Race, all with different algorithms to cope with the differing styles. I'm someone who enjoys all three environments on two wheels, so to have the choice so easily changeable via the front button is exceptional, and easy to navigate and understand too as it vibrates when you are scrolling through. The system connects to the Tech-Air app for updates and other features, such as mapping your ride.

Although £699.99 seems like a lot of cash

on the surface, it's worth its weight in gold – especially as that price includes everything you need to get going, with no subscription necessary and an easy process to reset, should you activate it in anger. The gas canister can be easily accessed and replaced at home for £89.99 (as long as the bladder isn't damaged) and this can be done six times before a more costly service is required, which will cost you £299.99.

As with other airbag systems, I've had a play around with the system armed and have tried to abuse it in a vast array of conditions and situations, and haven't had, or heard of any premature deployments.

Alpinestars say that millions of test miles have gone into the algorithm for this system, and I certainly trust it across the board. Plus, the charging port is very easy to access without removing panels, and the battery lasts for days of riding.

On the subject of which, although (thankfully) I've yet to deploy the Tech-Air 5 Plasma in an incident, I've experienced the previous generation Tech-Air race system's deployment, which was extremely fast and accurate, and goes a long way to prevent injuries around the upper body. Although it's a fairly hefty investment, it's well worth it.

**MCN rating ★★★★★**  
[www.alpinestars.com](http://www.alpinestars.com)

### PROS & CONS

- + Serious protection, across disciplines
- Needs a slight wriggle getting in leathers



Set it off? It's an easy change



A doddle to switch settings and check the battery life