

MCN staff's bike gear rated

Our verdict on all the kit we've been testing. Compare and find more at www.mcshop.com

Ultimate Hearing Protection Systems Squidgy earplugs, £59



Tester: Tim Thompson
Used for: 12 months

What's good: All-day comfort and consistency. Ultimate's Squidgy plugs are noticeably softer and more compliant than other bespoke plugs I've used. Like a good pair of specs you forget you're wearing them, even at the end of a monster ride. They fit beautifully, making for a consistently good ear-to-plug seal – not the case with my roll-'em-and-stuff-'em disposable plugs. I've also noticed that because I spent £59 on them I make sure I wear them every ride; again, not so with that pair of grotty foamies.

What's not: There's the initial hassle of having the impression moulds made (they inject warm silicon into your ears but it's quite pleasant). And you have to visit a bike show or an audiologist (Ultimate will direct you) to have it done. I lost my pair and had to send my supplied impression moulds back to Ultimate for replacements to be made. The service took three weeks.

Contact: www.ultimateear.com

Rating: ★★★★★



Great fit for all-day comfort – you'll forget they're in

Oxford Premium Hot Grips £79.99



Tester: Adam Child, Senior Road Tester

Miles covered/time: 2500 miles, two months

What's good: I've ridden through winter every year since I was 17 and each year is a constant battle to stay warm, especially my hands. But thanks to the Oxford Premium Hot Grips, this winter has been far less painful with toasty hands despite riding a sporty GSX-R1000. The hot grips took less than an hour to fit. The simple plug-in wiring is easy, even for me.

There are five heat settings with an LED light indicator for simple and easy adjustment, even when wearing large winter gloves. There's even a battery-saving mode built in, which means if you forget to turn off the grips they will switch off automatically and won't drain your battery. The grips are warm enough even when the temperature drops below freezing. My hands only start to get cold towards the end of a sub-zero 90-mile ride, which isn't bad.

What's not: You obviously have to remove the standard grips, which is a bit of a pain when you're fitting the new grips and the hot grips are wider than the standard grips. However, they're



Effective on a 90-mile winter ride in sub-zero temperatures

not that much wider than standard, unlike the hot grips from 10 years ago which were wider than scaffolding.

Contact: www.oxprod.com

Rating: ★★★★★

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