



**TRIED & TESTED**  
MCN STAFF RATE THEIR RIDING KIT  
★★★★★



Pure retro styling and you can popper-on a peak

Shoei Ex-Zero review £429.99

# 'Vain? Me? Well, maybe...'

**Tested by Ben Clarke for 2 months**  
This Shoei Ex-Zero is a lightweight, comfy and fairly practical helmet (in fair weather at least) but I couldn't care less about all that. Look at it. It's so good-looking that I'd still wear it if it crushed my head. I'd probably still wear it if I couldn't see where I was going or it was made of immaculately finished papier-mâché. Maybe that makes me a dandy, but I don't care...  
Luckily for me and my disgusting vanity, the Shoei suffers none of those shortcomings. In fact, despite its lightweight design and jet-style drop-down visor, the Ex-Zero scores an impressive 4-star SHARP rating. So I can waft around trendy bike meets and coffee shops to my heart's content, safe in the knowledge that I'm also well-protected.  
The Ex-Zero weighs in at just 1227g on my scales (size L) and it feels very light to wear on the bike when you are doing quick shoulder checks or looking back and forth at a junction. It makes you feel incredibly free and

unincumbered if you're nipping out in jacket and jeans to a pub or the shops and means it's comfortable for longer periods, too.  
As discussed before, I'm a vain idiot and so will be wearing the Ex-Zero come what may, but in all honesty it's not a great helmet for covering distance. If you're less concerned with the aesthetic, you might be put off by how noisy it is at speed, how cold your face gets below about 6°C and the way the open-face design is about as aerodynamic as a bucket. This would obviously be less pronounced on a bike with any wind protection at all, unlike the Indian FTR S I've been riding.  
I always intended to wear goggles with this helmet to complete the look but it does also have a drop-down visor, which you can adjust to three positions. I have to use the bottom position otherwise too much air makes it through to my eyes. I've found it really handy to use if I stay out after dark rather than taking a clear goggle lens or an extra pair. To up the practicality further or if you ride a retro style or classic adventure bike, you can add a peak that

clips on with press studs.  
At £429.99, I can't claim that the Ex-Zero represents great value but a cursory browse through the internet throws up plenty of deals to be had from reputable sellers. North of £400 feels like a lot of money for a summer cruising helmet that will live in the cupboard for three seasons per year for many riders. But if you're as bloody-minded as me and will wear it whatever the conditions then you can get closer to your money's worth. It is rather spectacular-looking, after all.  
**Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★**  
[www.shoeiassured.co.uk](http://www.shoeiassured.co.uk)

### PROS & CONS

- +** Did I mention the looks? It is also light at 1227g on our scales
- Expensive for a vanity helmet and aerodynamics are challenging



It looks spot on with the Indian FTR S



Easy to use and very little chain fling

Tru-Tension Chain Cleaner £9.99 and Lube £9.99

## 'Going bananas'

**Tested by Justin Hayzelden for 18 months**  
Keeping on top of chain maintenance is a dirty job, but an essential one. Tru-Tension offer two banana fragranced products designed to make it a breeze.  
The PrimeShine Cleaner's nozzle puts out a powerful spray, which really helps to dislodge the dirt. I give it a liberal squirt along the lower run of the chain whilst spinning the rear wheel and by the time the chain's travelled through one complete cycle most of the filth has gone – even when it's been caked with winter road gunk. A quick wipe with a rag removes the excess and the remainder evaporates without a trace.  
BananaSlip is a dry lube that goes on wet – very wet. The incredibly thin consistency enables it to run right in to exactly where it's needed and it only takes a short blast with a light finger to dispense the necessary amount. BananaSlip dries fast leaving little trace other than a clear coating on the links which is slightly waxy to the touch. Its anti-fling capabilities are extremely good, especially if left overnight.  
I've never had a particular favourite when it comes to chain care kit, but the combination of BananaSlip Lube and PrimeShine Cleaner is a clear winner in my book – it's quick and effective. Maybe it's the surprisingly pleasant aroma of bananas that Tru-Tension infuse into their product or the fact that it's proven itself to offer genuine all-season protection, either way there's now a permanent spot reserved for it in my oils cabinet.  
**Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★**  
[www.tru-tension.co.uk](http://www.tru-tension.co.uk)



Oxford Heritage backpack 30L £89.99

## 'Seriously comfortable'

**Tested by Gareth Evans over one year**  
This was my first foray into the world of more fashionable luggage, following a number of more functional items, and the moment I put it on I noticed the difference. This bag is seriously comfortable thanks to its padded shoulder straps, which can be connected to adjustable chest and waist straps to keep the bag in place while you're riding. I was impressed with the quality of the materials too – both inside and out. The waterproof liner is removable in case you need to clean it, while there's a laptop pocket and a good-sized main compartment for your odds and ends.  
The outer shell is a soft water-repellent

waxed cotton and canvas arrangement featuring an external zipped pocket with poppers on the front. The roltop is secured at both sides by metal clips and adjustable 'compression' straps. There are also two large metal buckles, which are my only real complaint with the design – they're fiddly and never feel particularly secure. This is not a single point of failure though, as mentioned above, so I never felt concerned.  
In fact, I never had a single problem with this bag. It was a brilliant companion for nights away or days out with the laptop. The price is a little indulgent, but there are deals available right now if you shop around.  
**Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★**  
[www.oxfordproducts.com](http://www.oxfordproducts.com)



400 MILES

Heatrub Performance Move Hoodie £50

## 'Practical and will fit under any jacket'

**Tested by Joe Wright for 2 months**  
With its close but unrestricted fit this Heat Rub hoodie has been a must-have for my winter riding.  
Whilst not the most stylish hoodie I own, its ability to retain heat on any ride means it is a go-to when I layer up in the morning. The soft inner texture gives it a quality feel whilst still maintaining breathability if you start to warm up throughout the day. The over-sized hood feels a bit unnecessary and out of place, but has been a quick fix to helmet hair! Although the practical material isn't as fashionable as a regular hoodie, there is something to be said about the red Zerofit Box logo which adds a sporty element. In summary, I wouldn't choose it for its looks but this overlayer is a super light and compact (apart from the hood) hoodie, really practical and will fit under any jacket. It's kept me smiling on winter commutes.  
**Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★**  
<https://zerofit.co.uk>



Kriega R35 rucksack £199

## 'Motorcycling bag for life'

**Tested by Michael Guy for 6 years, 50,000+ miles**  
This has been my go-to rucksack from the day I got it and six years later it remains at the core of my riding set-up. Loaded with features, the stand out quality for me is the structure of the bag that means even when fully loaded with heavy kit you don't feel the weight on your shoulders when you ride. This is all down to the fully-adjustable straps and chest harness which zips up to absorb the weight. The front zipped harness also doubles as a chest protector while giving another impenetrable layer of weather protection on grim UK winter days.  
The overall comfort of the bag is enhanced by a stiff back panel which is heavily padded where it comes into contact with your back. There are two deep side pockets, which are cavernous enough to carry a water bottle in each. There is a mesh pocket at the top along with a meshed outer section designed for easy access where items can be secured with a tough elasticated drawstring. Plus, there is a phone size zipped pocket located in the front harness/chest protector.  
Turning to the inside, the main compartment is split into two sections with a thin area designed to house a lap top or a water bladder for hydration. There is also a fully waterproof internal pocket.  
With a total of 35 litres capacity this isn't a small bag, but with the external compression straps it never gets unwieldy even when it's completely full. Having used this rucksack extensively and with no desire to change, it really is hard to fault. Despite covering over 50,000 miles in all weathers, it's showing literally no signs of wear, which is impressive. The R35 comes with a 10-year guarantee from Kriega and on current form I doubt very much if I'll need it.  
While I love this bag, it's not perfect. It's water resistant – not waterproof – so you'll need to add a dry bag to your set-up. The internal waterproof pocket is too small – as it's not actually big enough for a phone or passport. At £199 it's not cheap either, but it is literally a bag for life and it's hard to put a price on true quality.  
**Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★**  
[www.kriega.com](http://www.kriega.com)

6 YEARS