

BIKEPACKING GEAR

TESTED

The perfect bags for carrying all the kit you need to head off for a two-wheeled adventure, on or off-road

An adventure by bike is far from a new idea, but bikepacking gear has emerged as an alternative to more traditional touring with panniers. With no pannier racks required on the frame it means the new style of bags can be fitted to almost any bike.

These bags offer a lighter, simpler method to carry everything you need for big rides and nights away. Another advantage is a more sleek, more aerodynamic profile when riding. With a wide range of bikepacking bag sizes available, it's still possible to carry everything needed – although more careful packing is usually needed to prevent the bags from moving about too much.

The most popular style of bags available include a seatpack, attached via the seatpost and saddle where the bulk of kit is usually carried, plus a frame bag, which maximises the internal space, and a front bag, which can either be directly mounted to the handlebars, or via a harness mount where dry bags can also be placed.



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FOR OUR
BIKEPACKING
TEST RIDE



Wildcat Lion handlebar bag £72 & Wildcat double-ended drybag £40, 328g



Wildcat Ocelot (S) Frame Bag, £73, 156g



Wildcat Tiger Drive seat bag £84 & Wildcat tapered drybag £34, 232g

OVERALL
9
10

WILDCAT GEAR

Wildcat are a small British company that just makes bikepacking bags, having refined the products over several years. The rear Tiger seatpack harness isn't the easiest to attach, but one of the most stable once in place and the big benefit of the removable tapered drybag is that it can be quickly taken off without removing the harness. The frame bag uses wide, strong Velcro straps and with two compartments, it's easier to organise your kit. The double-ended drybag is a neat feature, allowing you to separate wet kit from dry, but the extra material does add width and may not be as

suitable for narrower handlebars. The drybags are made from good quality waterproof fabric with taped seams and the frame bag and harnesses are all high quality VX fabric with waterproof YKK zips and zip garages to hide the zips when closed. In use, they're very stable when packed correctly even off-road or when climbing out of the saddle. A full range of sizes are available to suit any bike and Wildcat even offers a custom fit service. With reasonable weight and high-quality fabrics throughout, the Wildcat range should be durable enough for the longest and biggest of adventures.

VERDICT

Sturdy, lightweight and thoughtfully designed for easy use, these British made bags are quality items.

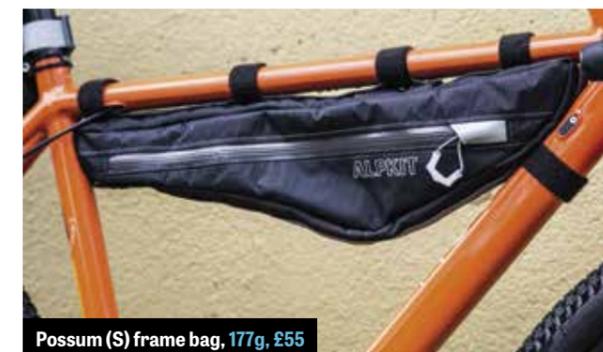
 Total weight 735g

 Total price £303

 www.wildcatgear.co.uk



Gnaro handlebar bag, 237g, £35



Possum (S) frame bag, 177g, £55



Koala seat bag, 251g, £70

OVERALL
9
10

BikesEtc

BEST
IN TEST



ALPKIT

Alpkit bags come in a huge range of designs and sizes, and even custom options; the set we have on test is perfect for smaller trips. The frame and seatpack are made from VX21, a multi-layer, highly water-resistant fabric. By keeping the designs minimalist the bags are the lightest on test but still designed to last with an incredible 25 year 'Alpine bond' guarantee on the frame and seatpack, and three years for the Gnaro handlebar bag. The Koala seatpack is easy to fit, with very small straps around the seatpost that might not inspire confidence but were flawless in use. The Koala was stable, although

must be packed well, following the guidelines. With well-placed, water-resistant zips, the frame bag is easy to use. A cable port makes it ideal for batteries to charge handlebar devices. What stands out is the webbing ladder and Velcro straps that mean it can be attached to virtually any type or size of bike without fouling cables or guides.

The 3-litre Gnaro handlebar pack is minimal but perfect for drop bar bikes, and stable on even the roughest terrain. A small zipped pouch is perfect for storing cash, or other small items that you need quick access to and the bungee webbing is a useful addition.

VERDICT

Packed with useful features, extremely sturdy and with options to suit every need, these are superb bags.

 Total weight 665g

 Total price £160

 www.alpkit.com



Altura Vortex framepack, £49.99, 130g



OVERALL
7.5
10

Altura Vortex seatpack, £59.99, 260g



Passport top tube pack, £19.99, 128g



Passport frame bag (M), £34.99, 189g



OVERALL
7
10

Passport seatpack (L), £55, 577g



Specialized Handlebar stabilizer harness & Burra Burra Drypack 13, 544g, £125



OVERALL
8
10

Specialized Burra Burra stabilizer seatpack 20, £140, 622g



Apidura handlebar bag (compact), 230g, £77



Apidura Road Frame pack (S), 147g, £66



OVERALL
8
10

Apidura Saddle pack, £98, 303g (m)

ALTURA

► The Altura range of expedition bike bags are new to the market, with the Vortex range of bags. Although the seatpack comes in standard and compact options, there is only one size of frame bag available, which could make it difficult to fit on smaller frames and could obscure water-bottle access on some bikes due to the deeper, more triangular shape. As well as the seatpack and frame bag we tested, the range also include a 12-litre handlebar bag and a 1-litre top tube bag. Its multiple strap mount locations are good for a secure fitting to avoid any cable mounts or ports. Fabrics used are

waterproof with taped internal seams and water-resistant zips. The fabric on the frame bag is quite flexible, meaning it can bulge easily so careful packing is essential to prevent it swelling and knocking your knees. The seatpack is one large compartment, but the frame pack does have a smaller zipped section for easy access.

The seatpack is a standard design with roll down and buckle closure and offers up to 12 litres storage. While it's quick and easy to fix on the bike, it isn't very stable, with notable swing side to side, which is exaggerated even more when climbing out of the saddle.

VERDICT

Not the most stable bags available, and size options are limited but full waterproofing is a bonus.



Total weight 390g



Total price £109.98



altura.eu

PASSPORT

► The new range of bikepacking bags from Passport offer big volume and reasonable prices, being the cheapest full set on test. All the bags use a variety of fabrics, with the main material being a water-resistant, durable nylon. The seatpack features an internal waterproof liner, helping keep water at bay in the worst weather, although the extra material adds weight and also has a habit of pulling out when unloading. Two small external pockets on each side of the seatpack could be useful for quick access, but a strap directly over the zip means it isn't perfect and with no inner, they are not

fully waterproof. The majority of zips on all the bags are water-resistant, but the top tube bag has a standard zip. Given this is where devices or batteries might be kept, we'd have liked to see a bit more waterproofing. All mounting straps are well placed, but don't feel as strong or as grippy as some of the others on test. There are some very neat touches, though, such as the simple but effective reflective logo and internal pocket in the frame bag. If you're just starting out and don't want to spend too much, the Passport range would make a great starter set, durable enough for the less extreme adventures.

VERDICT

Very keenly priced bags, ideal as a starter set for those just getting into bikepacking.



Total weight 894g



Total price £109.98



passportcycles.co.uk

SPECIALIZED

► The Specialized Burra Burra range of bags are incredibly strong and durable, made with heavy duty materials. The unique feature for the handlebar and rear seatpack is the alloy stabiliser arms, making them extremely secure with even the biggest and heaviest of loads. The use of clamps and a metal tube section for the seatpack does make it harder to fit/remove on the bike, though. The front harness also uses metal clamps, holding the bag clear of the handlebar tape, making it the only setup where it is possible to hold the tops of the bars while riding. One niggle is the small 3mm hex bolts on the clamp – larger bolts

would be less prone to rounding off. The 13-litre drypack used with the front harness has a useful small but easy to access compartment with zipped access and a double-sided main compartment.

Another nice feature is the plastic clips, complete with lockable clasps that make it secure and less prone to coming loose while also being simple to adjust. The thicker materials and stabiliser clamps do add weight, making them the heaviest individual parts on test by some margin. Weight may not be a major concern to everyone, especially when all bags are packed with kit.

VERDICT

A unique clamp design makes these by far the most stable bags on test, even when fully loaded.



Total weight 1,166g



Total price £265



specialized.com

APIDURA

► Apidura are arguably the best-known bikepacking brand, with a wide range of frame, handlebar and rear seatpacks available in various sizes. The bags on test are perfect for shorter bikepacking trips, or for those who like to go minimalist.

The four-layer Dimension-Polyant VX fabric is highly water-resistant and lightweight while remaining durable, and the zips are all water resistant, with easy-to-pull tabs, even when wearing gloves. The straps used to secure the packs to the bike are easy to fit and secure on rough roads even when packed full, although they are not so easy to adjust, which may be a problem

on certain frames. Both the front and rear packs are secure in use with very little swing, even when pedalling hard out of the saddle.

The frame pack has two full length zips for easy access and a neat cable port, which could be useful for storing a battery to recharge devices on the go, or even a hydration bladder hose. There is no easy to access port however and the seams are not fully sealed, which could mean water ingress in heavy rain. The compact front roll is a good size for use on a drop-bar road bike, though, with dual roll-top closure and a bungee cord tie down used for extra storage. 

VERDICT

Stable, easy to use and available in a great range of sizes, Apidura bags deserve to be as popular as they are.



Total weight 680g



Total price £241



apidura.com