






D30 is flexible but protective

4000 miles ON TEST

Casual looks but AA-rated

Merlin Carter D30 Ghost shirt £249.99

‘Style and safety’



Tested by Joseph Wright for seven months

I can't be the only one who dreads wearing heavy motorcycle gear to social events, so I decided to try the Merlin Carter D30 Ghost riding shirt. This single-layer, long-sleeve shirt features a practical zip-and-button closure, full D30 armour, and sizes ranging from small to 4XL to suit most builds. It includes four front pockets (though the lower ones are too snug for practicality) and a zippered inner pocket, perfect for essentials such as your phone or wallet.

The active stretch cotton fabric delivers exceptional comfort, offering breathability on warm days while keeping you warm as temperatures drop. It pairs effortlessly with riding jeans, and colour options include black, green, and camel to match Merlin's vintage aesthetic. The shirt's AA-rated protection, premium D30 back protector, and thoughtful details including expanding shoulder panels and a snap-down collar enhance its appeal.

At £249.99, it's not cheap, but the superior design, quality materials, and safety features make it worth every penny.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
merlinbikegear.shop



AA-rated yet lightweight

Pando Moto Armoured Base Layer €279

‘Like a second skin but safer’



Tested by Charlotte King for five months/2500 miles

This armoured base layer by Pando Moto has really impressed me, it's like a second skin; so fitted and lightweight that you feel like you shouldn't be wearing it on a motorbike, yet somehow it scores an AA CE safety rating with Level 1 armour at the elbow and shoulder. I have also added the matching Level 2 back protector (€45) for additional safety, this is sold separately.

I've worn it numerous times on its own, on occasions when the weather has been above 26°C or so, and it has proven to be very cooling when riding, however if the zip is not done all the way up the wind will catch it and it will unzip itself, less than ideal but it is comfortable enough to be worn all the way up (I usually don't do my jacket zip all the way to the top as I find it uncomfortable).

The only real downside to wearing it as a standalone garment is that there are no pockets for my earplugs, but this is only a minor thing. I've also worn it under a casual unarmoured hoodie because it is so snug that you can wear almost anything you like over the top of it.

I've also worn it under an A-rated textile jacket in place of a separate back protector, my logic being that wearing the AA-rated base layer underneath makes the textile jacket more protective as a layered system, and it is far more comfortable than the back protector that was supplied with the jacket.

It's a unisex garment, but this isn't an issue with fit due to just how stretchy it is, although I do find that the thumb loops are too large for my hands, so they tend to get in the way.

It's remarkably comfortable due to its power-stretch Balistex fabric and SAS-TEC TripleFlex low profile armour that is so soft and flexible you almost forget that you're protected. I now opt for this base layer and an additional layer in preference to some of my other jackets, thanks to how comfortable it is. A really versatile bit of kit that certainly stands out from the rest.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
pandomoto.com

2500 miles ON TEST



Great feel and they will work your phone

9 months ON TEST

Knox Action Pro gloves £49.99

‘Bargain price and premium feel’



Tested by Nye Davis for nine months

These CE-certified textile gloves are an absolute bargain, especially when backed by Knox's excellent customer service. Although very basic and lacking waterproofing, they're comfortable and offer excellent feel.

Barring one minor stitching issue that was quickly resolved with the dispatch of a replacement, they've also managed not to fall to pieces – despite plenty of off-road abuse.

Whilst they're not the most protective, they do come with soft knuckle armour and

scaphoid protection – they also have handy touchscreen compatible fingertips.

I've used these for one season of green laning, enduro racing (including a 24-hour solo affair), a spot of continental touring, and the odd commute – and in that time, they've remained the comfortable, well-fitting pair of gloves that they were from the off.

In fact, I've grown so fond of them, that the only time now I'll reach for another pair of gloves is for trackdays, but for everything else, the Knox Action Pros hit the mark.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.planet-knox.com



Alpinestars SM5 £239.99

‘Light with stacks of airflow too’



Tested by Steve Herbert-Mattick for four years (sort of!)

I got this during lockdown. I tried a small and a medium with every combination of cheek pads available and it felt like a breeze block on my head – all the wrong shape and just as uncomfortable. Then I forgot I had it. A few months ago I spent two days at Honda's Adventure Centre in Devon. Digging out kit for the school I found the SM5 and tried it on. Fit was incredible – amazing what a few years of middle-aged spreading can do! I wore it for two full off-road days in perfect comfort. It's wonderfully light, works perfectly with goggles as you'd expect and has masses of airflow. Don't pay full price – there are deals online.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.alpinestars.com

4 years ON TEST