



5000 MILES

There's even very helpful padding

Oxford Aqua Evo 22L backpack £99.99

'The inner bag makes all the difference'

Tested by Michael Neeves, 5000 miles/seven months



I've always liked roll-up PVC-type rucksacks as they're completely waterproof. There are no seams for rain to seep into, no fabric to get waterlogged. But what I haven't liked with ones I've used before is they're like a sack with no outside pockets or inner compartments. Sometimes you want to be more organised.

Oxford's Aqua Evo has a waterproof front pocket for keys, wallets and passport when travelling. Inside there's a removable padded bag fixed with Velcro. It's this inner bag that makes all the difference. It has two large pockets for laptops and paperwork, two small pockets and a zipped mesh pocket. It keeps the bits you want to keep nice and the rest of the 22 litres can be used for everything else.

I've worn it on road tests, travelling to foreign launches and for shopping runs, and its chest and waist straps and padded back section help distribute the weight. It's been ultra-durable and completely waterproof, even in hours of torrential rain. And at £89.99 it's great value for money.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.oxfordproducts.com



At a glance, you'd never guess they were CE-approved

DXR Bernie boots £64.99

'Cool looks, decent price'

Tested by Simon Brown, 1000 miles/six months



These CE-approved boots are billed as breathable, and having just ridden two hours up the M5 in 30°C conditions I can confirm that they did indeed remain comfortable

for the duration without becoming sweaty or unpleasant.

Obviously, they aren't as protective as a full-on pair of sports or touring boots but they combine nicely with armoured jeans and don't look outlandish when you reach your destination. Also, added protection comes courtesy of reinforced ankle armour that is subtly incorporated into the design. The grippy sole ensures a cosy connection with the pegs and has decent flex for comfort when you are walking about – particularly handy in my case because I stash my bike in a rented lock-up about a quarter of a mile from my house.

Some retro boots feature a zipped closure but I prefer standard laces like these because you can get a nice secure fastening every time and it's hard to argue that doing up your laces is any sort of hassle. Double knot, naturally; don't want them coming undone. Construction is full-grain leather and the boots still look smart after six months of wear, the only slight blot being a degree of scuffing on the gearchange pad. I suspect I will have to locate some neutral shoe polish and see if that will buff out.

On the plus side, the pad does mean you can change gear easily and comfortably. DXR (who are a French brand, if you are not familiar with them) market the boots as waterproof. So far I have only been caught in light showers but they have proven to be absolutely happy with that level of precipitation.

I can't argue with their price, either. They are available in Euro sizes 40-48 which works out as 6-14 in UK sizing. I normally take a 10 and size 44 is perfect for me. I am a fairly narrow fit, too, and find them perfect in that regard (plus I can lace them up reassuringly tightly anyway). Don't like the 'vintage light brown' colour? They also come in black if that is more up your street.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.sportsbikeshop.co.uk



4 MONTHS

Tucano Urbano Ovetta CE Jacket £99.99

'Stylish and functional'

Tested by Ali Silcox, 2000 miles/four months



I love protective kit that doesn't look bikey. And Tucano Urbano are experts at making their gear look stylish, while also being practical and functional.

The Ovetta jacket is no exception. CE-certified to an A rating, this soft-shell jacket is water resistant, has a fleece lining and a windproof membrane. It's a great fit, has been designed specifically for women, and the fit is true to size. There's cuff adjusters and the sleeves fit perfectly under all

manner of riding gloves. Zipped outer pockets accommodate keys and cash, while inner pockets will hold a mobile phone.

I've worn it since the spring and found that because there's no venting it does get a little hot on warmer days.

There's CE-approved, Level 1 armour at the shoulders and elbows plus a back protector pocket, the back protector can be purchased for around £35.

For less than £100 it's great value, and a welcome addition to my riding wardrobe.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.tucanourbano.com



Oxford Magnum Duo U-Lock £59.99

'Pleasingly adaptable'

6 MONTHS

Tested by Ed Armitage for six months



Big chains are great for peace of mind, and disc locks are quick and easy to use. The Magnum Duo performs the role of both. It comes with a 1.2-metre plastic-coated steel cable, which I've wrapped around a solid anchor point in my garage and attach to the bike with the U-lock through the wheel and swingarm.

When out and about I just take the U-lock to use as a beefy disc/wheel lock. The Duo comes with a bracket – it's designed for cycle use but fits neatly around the grabrail on my WK Scrambler.

It boasts Sold Secure M/C Gold, ART four-star and police certification, so gives faith that my bike will stay where I park it. After six months of use in all weathers it still slips together easily and the pick-resistant lock is as smooth as when new.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.oxfordproducts.com

6 MONTHS