

TRIED & TESTED

MCN STAFF RATE THEIR RIDING KIT

★★★★★

No broken collar bones today, thanks

4000 miles ON TEST



The tab is super secure



Dainese Smart Air £599.99

'Good value and well thought out'



Tested by Carl Stevens for seven months

Airbags may seem expensive compared to a standard back protector, but they're a worthy investment; just think about how much time you'd be taking off work with a broken collarbone or set of ribs, which have more chance of being saved by an airbag. I've had my fair share of deployments over the years and they've played a huge part in keeping my upper body in one piece, to the point where I rarely ride without one, on both road and track. And they've come a long way in the last few years, with the Smart Air from Dainese offering some impressive features without a mammoth price tag.

Firstly, the fact that the inflator is easily replaceable makes it far more

attractive than previous models, which had to be serviced or sent away after a deployment. This means that the vest can be activated three times (with the £109 inflator) before needing a closer inspection and a new bladder to keep it going. Also, there's no need for a subscription, unlike some of its rivals, which is a big bonus. Not only is it good value and well thought out, but it feels comfortable on the bike too.

At 1.56kg it's incredibly light, and although it can be worn on top or underneath kit, it fits far better for me underneath most riding gear, as long as there's a small amount of space for inflation – although due to the bulk at the rear, it's not the comfiest airbag to use with a backpack (and, of course, only certain styles should be used to allow for proper inflation).

The sizes are true to life (if not a

little bit on the small side in terms of the length) and although there can be no perforation for obvious reasons, due to its slim dimensions and compact size it's one of the coolest airbags I've used. It has a handy pocket in the front for any essentials such as a phone and receipts, and the activating mechanism is secure and easy to use, with a nice tab that can be applied when the vest is not in use. The LED status light for battery life and vibration for arming is also handy for making sure you're ready to roll for every journey. Although the Smart Air is both light and compact, the battery has a reasonable lifespan to it as well, lasting for well over ten hours in a single charge which will be enough for most 'normal' rides.

Although that might not seem like a lot it's more than enough for a big day in the saddle, and it only takes around

four hours to fully charge, too. On the subject of which, one slight niggle is in the location of the charging port, as it sits underneath the bottom of the protection and isn't the slickest charging slot to access quickly. Also, although the Dainese app is relatively easy to understand and use for updates and general use once the airbag is connected, it does have a few glitches which can be a bit of a frustration on an Apple device.

MCN Rating ★★★★★
www.nevis.uk.com

PROS & CONS

- + **Lightweight, easy to use and great value for money**
- **A bit bulky at the back where the hardware sits**



The rear is a bit bulky for a backpack



The charging port access isn't perfect