



4000
miles
ON TEST

13 vents but it's
not too noisy

LS2 Explorer MX701 £219.99

'Great looks but a bit disappointing'



Tested by Joseph Wright for six months

I was drawn to the LS2 Explorer helmet for its aggressive design and attractive price. The fit is true to size, with options ranging from XS to 3XL, providing a snug and comfortable feel for long rides. However, the helmet's weight can become fatiguing during off-road adventures.

The large, removable visor offers excellent field of view, and the Pinlock prevents fogging. Unfortunately, swapping visors is tricky due to a fiddly screw mechanism, and the sun visor is ineffective, and fell out in off-road use.

While the helmet's ventilation system looks impressive with its 13 vents, it doesn't prevent overheating during intense rides. On the plus side, the helmet is surprisingly quiet, likely due to its aerodynamic shape.

Though it stands out with its unique design and variety of colour options, the helmet's build quality is disappointing. Although it's competitively priced, the Explorer's durability issues and off-road performance detract from its value – it's more style than substance.

Quality ★★★★★ **Value** ★★★★★
ls2helmets.com



The
Aircud
Flex calls
for help if
you crash

Tucano Urbano Aircud Flex £245.89

'Airbag vest; inflated pricing'



Tested by Gareth Evans for five months

The Aircud Flex is Tucano Urbano's latest airbag-ready jacket, and is designed with dual use in mind: it can be worn over lightweight clothing for protection while riding in the city, or alternatively you can wear it underneath a looser-fitting jacket to add airbag protection to your existing outfit just as long as it doesn't already have a back protector.

Tucano Urbano say there's "no problem with sizing: if you wear an L, get an L". I would counter this claim, because I

do wear an L, and my Aircud Flex is a rather tight-fitting XL.

Somewhat fortuitously I've also been testing a larger-sized RST leather jacket, and the two things work well together, but the Flex won't go under my other jacket: a tighter-designed Spada. I also look a little Bibendum-esque wearing it under my RST.

The fit itself is pleasingly well managed, with no annoying extra fabric bunching up. It's well vented and has elasticated hips and shoulders. The zip and safety popper on the front feel robust. You can barely feel the back protector as a result.

From a safety perspective, the Flex is a – which means it's been designed to offer impact protection only for the areas covered by the impact protector (in this case the back) and has been designed to be worn alongside other CE-rated safety clothing to enhance protection. It offers no abrasion resistance.

And then of course it features the app-controlled In&Motion airbag system we've come to know quite well over the years, making the whole proposition quite a lot more expensive. This is subscription-based, costing £12 a month (or £400 to buy the box outright), and has a few handy features wrapped into its slick smartphone application.

This version has an automatic emergency calling function that can detect a crash and call for help. It also has an unlimited warranty and its software can be updated over the air.

Overall, this feels like an expensive solution when compared with full airbag jackets, many of which are available for less money with better protection and the same airbag, but it does allow you to add the tech to existing kit without buying a whole new wardrobe.

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

1000
miles
ON TEST



Easy to stash rain-beaters

Richa Rain Flare jkt & jeans £99.99/£99.99

'Easy-on Hi-Viz'



Tested by Charlotte King for five months

Typically more of a fair-weather rider, I wanted some waterproofs that could be stowed in a backpack and thrown over my normal bike gear should I get caught out. I ordered the Richa Rain waterproofs a size up from what I would usually choose to allow for plenty of room for kit underneath. The trousers are easy to put on thanks to the zipped sides and have a connection zip to attach to a jacket. The Rain Flare jacket is aptly named as it is entirely reflective, which gives great visibility in poor weather. I have worn them in torrential rain for several hours and remained dry apart a small area at the seat in extended use.

Quality ★★★★★ **Value** ★★★★★
nevis.uk.com

160
miles
ON TEST



Decent pockets
for stashing kit

3000
miles
ON TEST

Trails, touring...
they've done it all

Richa Apache TRS £219.99

'Style meets substance'



Tested by Nye Davis for five months

Richa's CE A-rated Apache TRS jeans have been a faithful companion throughout my testing. They've struck a great balance between looks and protection and have done a stand-up job of coping with demands beyond what you'd expect an 'around town' pair of trousers to cope with.

Mostly they've been subjected to regular UK based green laning and a spot of European touring. Never has comfort or fit been an issue, from 600-mile days, to hours spent on muddy

Welsh byways, and they've handled numerous low-speed spills without any failures.

Bar some colour fading and slight pilling, they appear as good as new. Pockets are plentiful, and I'm a big fan of the Richa's elasticated ankle cuffs.

They do take some time to dry, and without any waterproofing expect soggy legs should you get caught out in the rain.

CE Level 1 knee armour comes as standard; but, hip protection is not included (it can be purchased for an additional £24.99).

Quality ★★★★★ **Value** ★★★★★
www.richa.eu