



Grouptest

Hip packs

Bumbags were what many off-road riders use before hydration packs appeared. Now they're back. **Katherine Moore** tests four



KATHERINE MOORE

Katherine is a keen bikepacker and off-road rider who created the East Devon Trail eastdevontrail.com

Hip packs, bumbags or (for Americans) fanny packs – whatever you call them, they're gaining popularity among gravel riders, mountain bikers and bikepackers. More compact and lightweight than a backpack and offering more storage than many smaller on-bike bags, hip packs are being used for day rides and multi-day tours alike.

Most have room to stash your tools and spares, snacks and extra layers. This means you can ride in a technical T-shirt rather than needing a cycling jersey for pocket storage, yet still keep your valuables on your person rather than on the bike, which can be handy when going into shops and cafés.

Many mountain bikers have made the switch from rucksacks to hip packs as they offer a more lightweight and compact alternative, which can also help keep you cooler during the hotter, sweeter summer months.

While it can be tempting to opt for the biggest hip pack possible, there's a balance to be had. Overloading a hip pack can put extra strain on your back, just as carrying a heavy rucksack might. If you plan on riding with a camera, a hip pack can be a good place to keep it stowed and safe, and can help to keep it dry during rain showers.

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Fit It's wise to try on different options before you buy to see just how comfortable the straps are on your body. Wider straps tend to spread loads more evenly, and padding can also aid comfort.

2 Capacity Ranges from a couple of litres volume to six or more. The best option depends on whether you're looking for something to store all your gear (tools, spares, snacks and layers) or just a few essentials.

3 Water storage Will you run bottles on your bike, store bottles

in your hip pack or use a hydration bladder and hose? If you're heading somewhere really hot or remote, you might want to opt for more than one approach.

4 Durability How durable your hip pack needs to be will depend on whether you ride on road or off, just in summer or year round. Look for waterproof materials and seam taping for the most weatherproof packs.

5 Ventilation For ultimate comfort, look for options that have ventilation panels built in to avoid a sweaty lower back.



Cycle's test promise

At Cycle, we are proudly independent. There's no pressure to please advertisers as we're funded by **your** membership. Our product reviews aren't press releases; they're written by experienced cyclists after thorough testing.