



Grouptest

Bikepacking seatpacks

Designed for off-road touring on gravel or mountain bikes, seatpacks can add luggage capacity to almost any bike.

Hannah Collingridge tests four



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Hannah is a keen bikepacker – she's the author of the Pennine Bridleway guidebook

One big advantage of seatpacks over backpacks is that they take weight off your shoulders, relieving stresses and strains, and also leaving you less sweaty. Compared to panniers, the capacity is lower but they don't bounce around (or off) as much, and they protrude less. If you and your handlebar will fit through a gap, so will your seatpack-equipped bike.

The most important thing to consider is the clearance between the bag and rear wheel. This is easy to measure if you take your bike to the shop. Smaller frames with big wheels can be a problem, as can full-suspension bikes with more rear wheel travel. Some seatpacks will fit a bike with a dropper seatpost, but remember to check the space with saddle lowered.

How big a bag? Most have ways of compressing the load and adjusting the volume so err on the larger size. Compressing a bag also improves its stability. Most seatpacks will move at least a little even when everything is as cinched up tight. It's whether you notice that movement on the bike that's crucial.

In the UK, waterproofing of some kind is vital. Some bags are waterproof with welded seams. Some rely on dry-bags within the sack to keep the weather out.

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Capacity
Bikepacking seatpacks range from about 3L to 17L or more. How much room do you need? Try packing your kit into a shoe box – men's are usually about 11L, women's 6-7L.

2 Attachment
Most have two large straps for the seatpost and another for the saddle rails. Dropper-compatible seatpacks typically use a saddle rail bracket and a clamp around the top of the post, which limits but doesn't prevent dropper travel.

3 Harness or all in one?
All-in-one, direct-strap designs are the most weight/bulk efficient.

A separate harness/holster can be left on the bike while the bag goes walkies with you, however.

4 Weather resistance
A seatpack is likely to be sprayed with water and mud so look very closely at what the waterproof/water resistant descriptions actually mean. If in doubt, double bag. Having soggy spare clothes isn't fun.

5 Durability
Seatpacks are subject to a lot of wear and tear, so abrasion resistance and build quality count for a lot. A manufacturer's warranty terms are a good indicator of expected use life.



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