

Reviews

Gear up

COMPONENTS, KIT, AND MEDIA SELECTED
AND REVIEWED BY BIKE JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

Put to the test

Is there a product you'd like us to test? Write to: Cycle, Cycling UK, Parklands, Railton Rd, Guildford, GU2 9JX or [@editor@cyclingsuk.org](mailto:editor@cyclingsuk.org)



Pros & cons
+ Fast and grippy tread
+ Plush ride
- Overnight air retention

Challenge

Strada Bianca 650x46B TLR tyre

Wide and smooth-rolling all-roads tyre that also comes in 700C

£57 challengetires.com, upgradebikes.co.uk

Few tyres look as inviting as a Challenge Strada Bianca 650B freshly installed on a rim. It's one of many Challenge Strada Bianca tyre models, all with the same traditional and effective tread pattern, all but one of them made to fit 700C or tubular rims and many of them using a handmade clincher carcass in the 'open tubular' style.

This model has instead what is termed a 'nylon superlight vulcanized' carcass with 120tpi thread count. It inflates

to a slender 43mm wide on a 22mm Pacenti Brevet tubeless-ready rim. Not only is it a little narrower than the stated 46mm, but at 440g it's slightly heavier than the claimed 420g. Even so, it's a light tyre for the width – the 700x45C version is said to weigh 550g – thanks largely to its minimal tread and that smaller 650B size.

Fitting to said Pacenti rims was a cinch, the beads popping smartly into place under pressure. Both tyres then retained air for several minutes

but required the addition of sealant before they would stay up long enough to ride. The sidewalls proved porous enough to let some sealant ooze through when it was swilled around. Although both tyres then stayed inflated for several hours, both repeatedly lost significant air overnight despite extended efforts to spread the sealant around.

As ever, another rim might give another result, and Challenge recommends Challenge Smart Sealant, which may stick more effectively to the waxy, vulcanised surface of the carcass than the Continental sealant I used. The manufacturer suggests an inflation pressure of 1.5-2.5bar, or 21-35psi, with a maximum of 58psi. I tested at 32/40psi front/rear on a variety of surfaces.

Unsurprisingly, given the barely perceptible tread, mud does not feature in the tyre's list of recommended surfaces. Cobbles, hardpack, 'pavement' and gravel, ideally white and Tuscan, do. This is a tyre for all roads rather than off road, although the herringbone pattern is proven to work well in wet conditions.

Weight and low inflation pressure soften the Strada Bianca's performance on smooth roads, but throw in a bit of roughness and the voluminous tyre is in its element, swallowing bumps, stones and ridges with gusto while delivering plentiful grip, wet or dry. And it looks good while doing so. ●

Richard Hallett

Other options



RENE HERSE BABYSHOE PASS £82

Fast-rolling, lightly treaded tubeless-ready 650x42B tyre in several versions, including a 380g Ultralight. svencycles.co.uk



PANARACER GRAVELKING SLICK TLC £49.99

Light but easily punctured, supple, tubeless-ready flyer in three 650B sizes and one 700C. panaracer.co.uk

Verdict

Big air volume and a lightweight tread make this a real joy on cobbles or hardpack, while remaining a more than adequate performer on smooth asphalt.



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