



Pros & cons
 + Super stable
 + Five-year warranty & also repairable
 - Much smaller than panniers

Ortlieb

Fork-Pack 5.8L

Fork-mounted bags for gravel and mountain bikes

£62.50 each ortlieb.com

At less than half the volume of low-rider front panniers, these Fork-Packs are aimed at bikepackers and mountain bikers – or people who just want to travel light. Since we last wrote about them in Cycle, these quick-release, waterproof bags now also come in a tasteful dark sand colour and in two sizes: 4.1L and 5.8L.

The bag frames screw onto forks that have accessory mount holes. Using adapters, they can also be fitted to straight forks



like MTB suspension forks. I tried them on a gravel bike and a mountain bike, comparing them against my normal front-end bikepacking option of a handlebar luggage roll with the same 5kg test load.

I was delighted by how much more stable the handling was with the Fork-Packs, whether on rough singletrack or tarmac. The lower centre of gravity kept the steering more precise and planted; the bar roll had been more susceptible to a vague, swooping motion, and on my MTB caused a slight wobble at the handlebar.

Having the weight on the fork lowers meant that my mountain bike suspension fork didn't dive under the extra weight like it sometimes does with a heavy bar roll fitted. However, it did increase the fork's unsuspended mass, making the suspension slightly less effective.

The real surprise was that the Fork-Packs were so secure



on rough terrain, even when loaded near their maximum weight of 3kg each and taken over foot-high drops. Their plastic frames were rock solid on the fork and the quick-release mechanism kept the bags firmly in place.

Fixing the Fork-Packs' plastic frames to gravel forks is super easy, and they come with pressure-reducers for carbon forks. It's more of a faff to fit the metal band adapters to a mountain bike fork – perhaps 20 minutes' work. You'd probably want to buy a second pair of frames (£33) if you were going to use them on multiple bikes. If you have classic tapered, curved forks, or carbon forks without mounts, these bags aren't for you.

I tested the 5.8L Fork-Packs. While they seemed small at first, there was enough room for the small down sleeping bag, medium mat and small Nordisk Telemark tent that I normally squeeze into a 60cm bar roll on a mountain bike – a load I can't even fit in a narrower bar roll on my gravel bike. Tent poles longer than 34cm wouldn't fit, though. Each Fork-Pack weighs, 306g, including the frame. ●

Sean Fishpool

Other options



TAILFIN CAGE PACK
 £30-45 each

Drybag-style packs that are stable and waterproof. Available in 1.7L, 3L and 5L versions, they're designed to mount to fork cages – either generic ones or Tailfin's own. tailfin.cc



ALPKIT DELUGE HANDLEBAR BAG
 13L £34.99

Good-value handlebar roll at the simpler end of the spectrum, if you don't want fork-mounted luggage. Comes with an integrated harness. alpkit.com

Verdict

The Fork-Packs were a pleasure to use and brought a lovely balance to my bikepacking setup. Reassuringly waterproof for winter, I'll definitely continue to use them on both my gravel bike and my mountain bike.