

# ADVENTURE CYCLIST

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# HOLIDAY GEAR GUIDE

Gear, gizmos, and trinkets for just about everybody

by Mike Deme and Alison Riley

**Gemini Xera** (\$160, [geminilights.com/products/xera-flashlight](http://geminilights.com/products/xera-flashlight), 905-841-7868)

A few years ago, I reviewed the NifeFlux VisionStick, a combo flashlight/bike light. The Gemini Xera is very similar in that it's a flashlight first and bike light second, but a darn good second. It offers up to 850 lumens from a Cree XM-L U2 LED, plenty to see on the pavement or trail. Four beam patterns are available: low, medium, high, and flash. Runtimes are 10 hours on low, 3 hours on medium, and 90 minutes on high. It's powered by one Panasonic 3100mAh Lithium Ion battery that recharges fully in 5 hours. The anodized aluminum Xera with the battery



installed weighs 5.7 ounces and is 5 1/4 inches long. It comes with a handlebar mount that attaches with a heavy-duty silicon o-ring and the Xera body connects to the mount via a tool-free easy-to-use



screw-in mechanism that also allows you to change the lateral angle of the light. All parts are replaceable and can be ordered on Gemini's website. If you're interested in a light that does it all, look no further than the Gemini Xera.

**Brunton Glacier 115** (\$70, [store.bruntonoutdoor.com/lighting/headlamps/glacier-trade-115](http://store.bruntonoutdoor.com/lighting/headlamps/glacier-trade-115), 307-857-4700) and **Kelty Flashback Mini** (\$40, [kelty.com/p-617-flashback-mini.aspx](http://kelty.com/p-617-flashback-mini.aspx), 800-535-3589)

If you'd rather pack a headlamp for your bike trip, you should consider the Brunton

Glacier 115. Headlamps make an excellent choice for your lighting needs allowing for hands-free operation so you can go about whatever you need to around camp from setting up a tent in the dark to reading a map or book before hitting the sack. The Glacier 115 provides five settings: low, medium, high (50 lumens with a 115-foot beam), flash, and a super-efficient steady green beam that is actually quite pleasant to read by, and the lamp can be adjusted up and down in four positions. The headband is very comfortable and can adjust to fit just about every head size. Other features include USB charging of 3 included rechargeable AAA batteries (it can also



run on regular batteries), power lock out so it can't be turned on accidentally, and a battery level and charge indicator light.

Don't like the headlamp option? The Kelty Flashback Mini lantern may interest you. This light is both a spot flashlight and a lantern. In both modes, it burns on low, medium, high (70 lumens in spot, 50 in lantern mode), and flash. Runtimes are 13 hours on high and 38 hours on low. The nice thing about the weather-resistant Flashback is that it's extremely versatile. Whatever task you're doing, you won't have to move your head to shine the light as you do with a headlamp and when you need the spotlight, you simply collapse the telescoping lantern and you've got an excellent hand held. You can even adjust the beam in between by sliding the lantern out just a bit providing a wider spot beam. When in lantern mode, the readable light area is about 10 feet.

The Flashback is even useful around the house or if kept in your vehicle for emergency purposes. It runs on 4 AAA batteries, has rubberized ends to reduce slippage, weighs 9.1 ounces with batteries installed, and is 3 3/4 inches long when collapsed and 5 1/4 inches in lantern mode. This light saved the night for me more than once this summer.

**Timex Cycle Trainer 2.0 GPS** (\$250, [timex.com](http://timex.com) or [tinyurl.com/bvr796u](http://tinyurl.com/bvr796u), 800-448-4639)

You know cycling is becoming mainstream when a longstanding company like Timex starts making products for the sport. I've always considered cycling computers nothing more than a necessary inconvenience because that's basically what they are. Necessary if you're on a tour or training for a tour, an inconvenience because you've got to connect a device to your bike and make sure it accurately receives the information passed to it by sensors connected to your wheel and fork by glorified rubber bands or zip ties. Accurately being the key concept because to get accurate information you have to measure your tire's rolling circumference and then plug that information into the cyclometer, aka a tiny computer with a miserable user interface.

What I really like about the Timex Cycle Trainer is that it changes the game. It uses the Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites to track your motion and displays a plethora of information based on the real-time date it interprets based on that motion. That's right, no more clamps or rubber bands that can break or loosen or figuring out what size your wheel or tire is. Speed, distance, altitude, power, time, slope, heart rate, calories, temperature — all of this information sent to you from space. Pretty cool.

Another great thing about the Cycle Trainer is that you can customize any of the five optional screens through your computer via its USB port. Once you've downloaded the software for your



computer — PC or Mac — the setup process is a snap. The Cycle Trainer is rechargeable and draws power from your computer (or any USB mini AC power source). Once it's



connected, you fire up the software, called the Timex Device Agent, and then turn the Cycle Trainer on. The Device Agent then recognizes the unit and allows you to access its functionality via the Settings tab. You use the Configuration tab to control the settings for your time zone, barometric pressure, power, compass, GPS, maps, and user info. You can also set the Cycle Trainer to work for three different bikes. All of this information can be captured and stored either on your computer or online via the Timex Ironman TrainingPeaks interface, where you'll find forums about how to get started, nutrition, mobile apps, and more. Charts, routes, maps, all of it can also be shared via Facebook.

If you're a serious trainer, it's here where you can really go crazy and create multiple training regimens and track just about all the information about your rides that you'll need to know to meet the goals you set for yourself. Whether your training for your first long-distance bicycle expedition or a local triathlon, you'll find the combination of the Device Agent and the TrainingPeaks software extremely useful.

While many of you may not initially think you'd find all of the functionality of the Cycle Trainer 2.0 useful, when it's as simple to use as Timex has made it, you'd be surprised at how easily you can put this information to good use, and there's more to come. I met with the Timex folks at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market in Salt Lake City recently and they have plans to continue to push the envelope and develop the Cycle Trainer even further. The least you'll get is a multi-

function cyclometer that doesn't require the typical setup hassles, although manual setup and use if optional for those who would still like to do so, so visit their website and check it out.

**SCICON TransAlp 2.0** (\$185, [tinyurl.com/cku4x7g](http://tinyurl.com/cku4x7g), [tinyurl.com/cm773as](http://tinyurl.com/cm773as))

The Italian company SCICON has been producing cycling products since 1980 but aren't very well known in the U.S. That could change with the introduction of the TransAlp 2.0. Creating combination products that will function well in both modes isn't easy. Many have tried and failed, but SCICON has done a pretty good job with the TransAlp, a combination pannier set/backpack. The TransAlp is really two pieces that combine into one for both purposes. First, as pannier set, the two pieces connect via velcro then straddle a bike rack saddlebag style. The bottoms connect to the rack by plastic covered stretch chords providing a decent anchor. There are front and rear pockets and the volume amounts to about 21 liters, so they're not high capacity but would be fine for a shorter-length tour in combination with front panniers.

When in backpack mode, the two compartments sit on top of one another and clip together at 4 points. Shoulder straps are removed from their storage compartment and a chest strap provides a bit more stability, but there is no waist belt.

The TransAlp is an interesting product



and one that you might find useful for daily use or short hikes and tours. I don't think words adequately explain exactly how the bags work in both modes so I recommend you take a look at the pictures on the second tiny url mentioned above or go check out the video on YouTube ([youtube.com/watch?v=aeSaHoz-yH8](http://youtube.com/watch?v=aeSaHoz-yH8)) by Darren Alff of Bicycle Touring Pro ([bicycletouringpro.com](http://bicycletouringpro.com)).

**Brooks Land's End Panniers** (\$165 each, [brooksendland.com](http://brooksendland.com) or [tinyurl.com/9dz3vgv](http://tinyurl.com/9dz3vgv), +44 121 565 2992)

Brooks England and bicycle touring are nearly as conjoined as peanut butter and jelly. When hearing the name, most people think saddles, and that's understandable,



but Brooks also makes a variety of other gear for cyclists. This year, they introduced the Land's End rear panniers, named after the famous Land's End to John O'Groats bicycle route that traverses Great Britain from south to north. As is the case with all Brooks products, the Land's End panniers are very stylish but go beyond looks and perform quite well. No doubt, the influence of Ortlieb can be seen here as the Land's End panniers are completely waterproof, a first in design for Brooks.

The Land's End panniers are roll-tops and are similar to other waterproof wet-bag style panniers popularized by Ortlieb. They are made from an exclusive waterproof textile whose seams are welded and

water to leak through) and features a lovely waterproof zipper that easily conceals itself beneath a rubber cover. The quick-release attachment system used by Brooks is the well-regarded German KLiCKfix by Rixen and Kaul which locks the pannier to the top of the rack and is kept from swinging by a lower catch. Both the top and bottom attachment devices can be easily adjusted to fit most standard racks and, in combination, provide an excellent and reliable connection between the pannier and rack.

Brooks England has done it again creating stylish and functional gear for serious traveling cyclists.

**Nutcase Beaver Fall** (\$60, [nutcasehelmets.com/ollections/street/gen2](http://nutcasehelmets.com/ollections/street/gen2), 866-956-8889)

Nutcase has updated their helmet line in 2012. The helmets that were originally created to fill a void in the youth/multi-use market and they had the urban look and a simplicity to match but with the added twist of being graphically imaginative. All of these things still apply but now Nutcase has upgraded nearly all of the components of their helmets. The Beaver Fall (16 ounces), which is a combination of matte black and brown with a large swath of orange and thinner blue racing stripes, offers two front vents, seven on top, and two more at the back. They've added a soft-fabric cover to the chin strap, an adjustable spin dial so you can fit the helmet as tightly to your head as you like, and reflective logos to the front, back, and sides (on the chin strap). Inside the injection-molded ABS shell,



combined with a roll-top closure to form an impregnable barrier against water. The roll top is synched down to the side of the bag by a beige nylon strap with classic Brooks clasp with slips nicely onto similar nylon loops. There is a front pocket which is welded to the main body (no stitches for

you'll find room for three sets of removable low-density polyurethane foam liners — one is sure to fit your bean just right. Nutcase has also added what they call an anti-pinch magnetic buckle which takes a bit of getting used to but is really quite slick and easier to unlatch with one hand



when wearing a glove than a standard pinch buckle release.

Each Nutcase helmet is certified CPSC (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission) for cycling and, if the Beaver Fall doesn't float your boat, there are a variety of designs and patterns to choose from.

**SPY Rivet** (\$95, [spyoptic.com/rivet/d/1192](http://spyoptic.com/rivet/d/1192), 866-516-0064)

SPY makes eye protection for a variety of outdoor activities and now the Rivet is made specifically for cyclists. The durable Grilamid Rivet open frame is very light and they rest nicely on the bridge of the nose, held there snugly by Hytrel hydrophilic nose pads and temple tips. The shatterproof lenses offer complete eye coverage and 100% UV protection and use SPY's ventilated scoop technology to reduce fogging while ARC technology allows for extremely low distortion at all angles. One of the things I like most about the Rivet is that the complete eye coverage is from top to bottom and side to side. When wearing these sunglasses with a helmet, the gap between the top of the Rivet frame and the bottom of the helmet is minimal. This total coverage helps to keep unsuspecting bugs that you may smack into from tumbling between the glasses and your eyeball. If that's never happened to you, try to keep it that way. It's not cool.

**RaviRatan Cyclist Wheel Cufflinks** (\$250, [cufflinks.com/cyclist-cufflinks.html](http://cufflinks.com/cyclist-cufflinks.html), 877-283-3565)

I'm not entirely sure, but I think this may be a first — men's jewelry appearing

in an *Adventure Cyclist* gear column. Well, this is the official Holiday Gear Guide, so I'm thinking that maybe when you go to the opera, your hubby might like to represent his favorite sport by wearing a beautiful set of cufflinks with his French-cuff shirt. Why not? Okay, not the opera? How about a night on the town for your special anniversary? Whatever the special occasion, these sterling silver cufflinks with a square-bullet backing will make all of the other cyclists in the room gape with awe at his inimitable style and his passion for cycling. And all three wheels spin independently. Fun for everybody. And ladies, French-cuff shirts are for everybody, so it's not just a guy thing.



**Swift Industries, Mini Short Stack panniers** (\$230 a set, [builtbyswift.com/products/4](http://builtbyswift.com/products/4), 415-608-8227)

Swift Industries is a two-person bicycle pannier company in Seattle, Washington,

that makes high-end, highly-customizable touring gear. They have been turning out some awesome gear lately, including a Brompton-specific handlebar bag and some classic trunk bags. I recently rode with a set of Swift's Mini Short Stack panniers while on my bike respite on Vancouver Island. The Mini Short Stacks are a slightly smaller version of Swift's Short Stack Panniers. They're designed to mount to the front rack of your bicycle for longer rides, and are perfect as rear panniers for bike overnights and stylish commuting. The Mini Short Stack are waterproofed with interior vinyl lining, and come with an external zip pocket, handle, reflective strip, hook-and-cord mounting system, 9" telescoping neck with double cinch cords, and a zip lid pocket (not waterproofed). These panniers look more like backpacks and have plenty of intuitive, adjustable storage features. All Swift Industry bags are made-to-order, so in addition to choosing your own colors, you can further customize your Mini Short Stack Panniers with Arkel Cam-Lock Mounting Hardware, an interior organizer pocket, D rings and shoulder



straps, classic waxed-canvas fabric, and a rear exterior pocket. These features will add a few dollars to your order, but for a bag of this quality, having it just the way you like it is well worth the extra cost. The pair Swift sent to Adventure Cycling were charcoal-colored waxed canvas with saffron and light-gray accents. The waxed canvas made the bags a bit too heavy for me. It is certainly more durable and makes for a gorgeous, absolutely waterproof pannier, but you pay for it in weight. That said, most of the touring cyclists I've seen

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with Swift Industries bags are rocking the waxed canvas and loving it. One pannier featured an interior organizational pocket (complete with pen holders), and came with D rings as well. The shoulder strap proved necessary. Both panniers included rear pockets (with reflective strips) that were great for stashing a coffee mug, water bottle, granola bars, sunglasses, cell phone, or U-lock, all of which were within easy reach when using the short stacks as front panniers. The external pockets were one of my favorite features, and a must, in my opinion. The panniers attach to the bicycle quickly and securely. You can upgrade to the Arkel Cam-Lock Mounting system for an additional cost, but I found the standard system to be solid and practical. Even on 50 miles of washboard, my panniers stayed right where they belonged. Overall, Swift makes a high quality, beautiful, and practical pannier that is sure to make even the most well-equipped touring partner a little jealous. Visit [builtbyswift.com](http://builtbyswift.com) to build yours.

— AR

**Bruce Gordon Rock n' Road Tire** (\$50, [bgcycles.com/rock-n-road-tire.html](http://bgcycles.com/rock-n-road-tire.html), 707-762-5601)

In 1995, Bruce Gordon sent me two Rock n' Road tires. I was blown away. At the time, it was the only 700c knobby tire on the market and I needed to ride it. Problem was, it was too fat for the fork on my Cannondale T-1000 to accommodate.

**Easton Mountain Products Kilo 1P** (\$350, [eastonmountainproducts.com/tent/kilo1p-tent](http://eastonmountainproducts.com/tent/kilo1p-tent), 800-800-6686)

These days, the trend is toward superlight gear, and the 3-season Kilo 1P tent fits into this category nicely. Weighing in at 30 ounces, the Kilo 1P packs up into

What to do? Well, have a new fork made, that was my answer. Once that new fork was made and installed, I popped the Rock n' Road on and off I went. In those days, I rode my touring bike everywhere and if I felt like hopping off the pavement and onto single track, I wanted the ability to do that. With the Rock n' Road, this was possible. Sure, it wasn't optimal but this increased the miles I could ride drastically and made riding a lot more fun. Unfortunately, there was no way to adapt the rear drop outs of the T-1000 to accommodate a Rock n' Road so it was a bit of a bumpy ride. The new version of the Rock n' Road (made in Japan by Panaracer) has the same pyramid-like step tread pattern but the construction is much better and lighter. At 43mm x 700c, the Rock n' Road rolls fast, weighs in at 19 ounces, offers a kevlar bead, and is nearly indestructible. And the best thing about it is that it's foldable so you can throw one in your pannier or BOB trailer and head off to the horizon, secure in the fact that if you do somehow manage to damage one beyond repair, you'll have a replacement handy.



it's stuff sack at 16 inches long and about 15 inches around, a perfect size to slip into a front pannier or into a Revelate Sweet Roll ([revelatedesigns.com](http://revelatedesigns.com)). The tent is made of 20D no-see-um nylon, the fly of 20D ripstop waterproof PU coated nylon, and the floor of a heavier 30D waterproof nylon. Without the fly, the tent above the seam-sealed bathtub floor is mostly mesh but is still very breathable and watertight with the fly. We haven't seen rain in Montana in many, many weeks so I had to turn the hose on the Kilo 1P and it held up well. There are situations where rain will pour down harder than a constant stream from a hose (very rarely in the West) so it's a pretty good indicator of how much water it can withstand.

But don't think you're going to squeeze two people into the Kilo 1P; it's basically a hybrid tent/bivy. With only one slender

air-lock pole made of Easton's proprietary Carbon ION material, it sets up quick. You lay the tent out and stake it, connect each end of the pole into opposite grommets, and then attach the tent to the pole by the quick clips.

There are five stake loops (they're the middle ones, not the end loops) and each strap has a clip that connects to the fly and synchs down. Once the vestibule and rainfly are guyed out, you've got some room to store gear, but not a whole lot. This double-wall tent is not intended to be used by someone who packs a lot of gear on tour. With a head height of 39 inches, a floor area of 18.8 square feet, and an additional 8 under the vestibule, it may force you to perhaps travel lighter than usual, which probably isn't a bad thing.

For more information and a quick setup video, check out their website. **AC**

## Stocking Stuffers

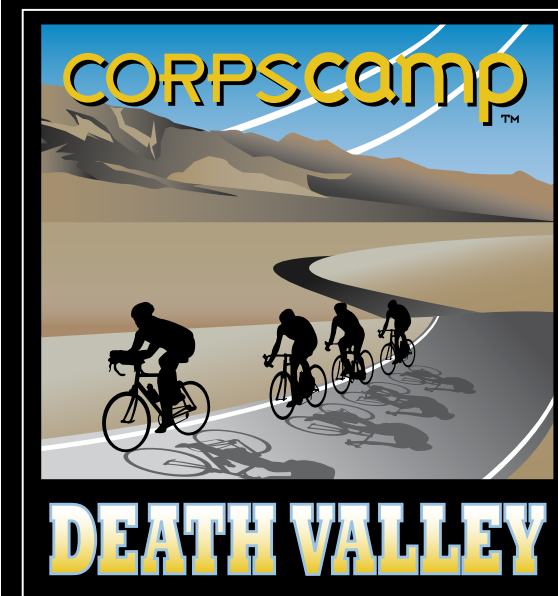
**Fatcat PowerBar** (\$69.95, [fatcatgear.com/fatcat-4200](http://fatcatgear.com/fatcat-4200), 845-258-9027) This small, 4 oz. USB charger will boost a mobile phone or iPod twice over. Very handy when your tour takes you to the beautiful places where there's no electricity. Comes with adapters for most common gizmos and can charge from a computer or a USB wall charger.

**Kupilka Cutlery Set** (\$15, [kupilka-products.com](http://kupilka-products.com), +358 (0) 50590324) This set of two spoons (big and small), a fork, and a knife are made of a natural fiber composite that is recyclable. The set weighs in at 2 oz. Also available are a 7 oz. cup that weighs 3 oz. as well as their bowls and plates. Give this set as a gift and your loved one will be the center of attention around camp.

**Footbrake Footwear Flip Flops** (\$25, [footbrake.net](http://footbrake.net)) Give your feet a break from your ungainly cycling shoes. Slip these foldable flip flops on when you stop for a beer or an americano and not only will your feet thank you, you'll be able to walk around without looking like you shins hurt. There very comfortable and fold up to about 3/4 of an inch. Skip them in your shirt's back pocket and away your go.

**Brincatti Refillable Bottle Travel Kit** (\$10, [brincatti.com](http://brincatti.com), 855-373-2700) The kit consists of four 3 oz. wide-mouth, easy-fill bottles. Each one has a flip top and they are leak proof. On top of that, they are TSA approved so they can go right from your luggage to your panniers, or whatever you're using these days to carry stuff on your bike. Whichever way, you can fill them with shampoo, liquid soap, rubbing alcohol, or whatever liquid substance you can't live without.

**The Bike Book: Lifestyle. Passion. Design** (\$60, [teneues.com](http://teneues.com), 212-627-9090) teNeues Publishing has assembled an absolutely beautiful 10" x 13" hardcover book that features just about every type of cycling machine imaginable. Touring, road racing, mountain, utility, commuters, folders, recumbents, e-bikes — all by a wide range of manufacturers. You name it, it's in these pages. As if that weren't enough, The Bike Book also includes full photo spreads of people using their bikes in a variety of ways. Also included are accessories of various kinds, special and concept bikes, and racks and bike storage. If someone you know is into the total cycling scene, they will love to find this book under the tree.



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