

# GEARED UP ▶▶▶

## Topeak Smartgauge D2X, \$58

Tire pressure has a dramatic effect on how your bike rides. Too much pressure: the ride will be jarring. Not enough pressure: your bike will feel sluggish and be more likely to flat. The squeeze test isn't an accurate metric to determine whether your tires are pumped firm enough. Homing in on your ideal tire pressure requires a good gauge. The D2X is an updated version of Topeaks' Smartgauge D2, and it's lightyears better than its predecessor. The gauge is sleek, easy to read, turns on and off reliably, and it's accurate from 5PSI up to 260PSI. The D2X has a pivoting head that's both Presta and Schrader compatible. A lever on the head of the gauge lets you choose which one you're inflating. Press the gauge onto your valve stem and the body of the gauge rotates independently of the head, making it easy to read the backlit digital display from any angle. You can't add pressure with this gauge — it's not a pump — but you can let it out using a pressure release button on the gauge neck. The readout adjusts as you release air. I've used this gauge on both Presta and Schrader bike tires. It's compatible with motorcycle and car tires too, as well as forks and shocks. The gauge measures in PSI, Bar, and Kg/cm<sup>2</sup>. To save battery, it automatically turns off in less than 30 seconds when it's not in use. And at under two ounces, it's worth carrying all the time. —BB



## PedalCell Power Generator, \$300

While I love my dynamo hub, it doesn't have charging capabilities and it's nontransferable to my other bikes, meaning I still need to keep tabs on the charge on my other headlamps. The PedalCell generator easily transitions from bike to bike to keep my devices charged as I ride. I even used it on my bike that already has a dynamo, to keep my phone charged while I used mapping services, and once I started pedaling, I didn't notice much increase in drag — though I did take advantage of a unique function of the PowerCell a few times while riding up some long, steep climbs by locking the device open to eliminate the modest drag.

It takes a moment for the charge to kick in, but once it starts, it's surprising how steady the charge is compared to the old bottle generators of yore. My phone didn't get a turbo boost, but I ended up with more power when I finished my bike ride than when I started. If you plan on using lights, make sure your lights have "pass-through" charging and can be used while plugged in. The PedalCell uses a USB-C (lightning charger) plug, but includes a USB A-C adaptor so you can still charge your devices that use a standard USB, including power banks. Which, by the way, I recommend, because the PedalCell doesn't store power so it's good to have some extra juice available in between rides. I've used this device on all of my bikes, and the only time it slipped is when I rode my road bike down some Paris-Roubaix-level cobblestone descents and over some poorly maintained train tracks. Otherwise, it has stayed put. While nothing beats being able to unplug entirely and not have to worry about power, I definitely was happy to use this product for the power needs I can't seem to shake. —CW



### Wren Inverted Fat Bike Suspension Fork, \$700

The beefy Wren, with keyed 36mm inverted stanchions, carbon rock guards, and a “TwinAir” air spring, offers a radically different option from the fat bike world’s stalwart suspension option in RockShox’s Bluto. On snow and above zero, the Bluto has always impressed this reviewer, but the fork’s slim 32mm stanchions are quickly overpowered if you ride fat tires year-round, and the Motion Control damper is ... *fine*.

Wren’s stouter platform was considerably more planted riding on dirt, though the difference in stiffness didn’t make an impression on snow. The brand claims its “All-Weather” damper maintains consistent performance down to -27°F, which is about 40° colder than this tester is willing to ride, not to mention considerably colder than western Montana delivered last winter. I found the damper performance consistent into the high single digits, but to be honest, on-snow squish has always felt pretty binary to me — it’s either there or it’s not.

On dry trails, I struggled to dial in the setup with the Wren’s TwinAir system, which uses a secondary air chamber in lieu of volume tokens to adjust the suspension curve. I whipsawed between a mushy initial stroke with a harsh ramp-up and a stiff but linear setup that did little to take the edge off small stuff. I have a good baseline pressure for “traditional” forks from Fox and RockShox, but just couldn’t get the Wren to feel as good as I suspect it can. If you hate fiddling, this might not be the fork for you.

After two consecutive seasons swapping between rigid and suspended fat bike riding on both snow and dirt, I think I’ve settled on a slight preference for rigid riding in snow and a strong preference for suspension on dirt to make a fat bike feel more like a “real” mountain bike. If your 5.0in. tires are a winter-only ride, the Wren might be a piece of very cool-looking inverted overkill. But if your fat bike is also your mountain bike, the stiffer platform is better equipped for all-around riding on dirt than the competition. Just remember to ride with a shock pump until you get things dialed. –AS

### Thule Tepui Foothill, \$1,800

Rooftop tents provide an awesome sleeping experience: a great view, unsurpassed ventilation, and some elevation between humans inside and curious animals outside are just a few of the benefits. Most rooftop tents take up the entire width of a vehicle roof, but Thule’s Tepui Foothill is different. It’s the first rooftop tent to leave rack space open for gear, including bike racks. The two-person Foothill is long and narrow on the roof, with a few differences from other softshell rooftop tents I’ve tested. To set it up, I had to crawl inside and expand the tent’s pole structure by pressing the poles toward the roof of the tent. Once the lower portion of the tent was expanded, I slipped pole ends into sleeves to fully deploy the roof. Once the Foothill is set up, which takes 15 to 20 minutes, the inside of the tent is airy and spacious, long enough for sleepers over six feet, with storage pockets on the sidewalls. Massive roof panels, large end panels, and oversized doors provided ventilation and a view, but I had to remove the rainfly to get it. With the rainfly on and weather-protective eaves over the doors and windows propped open, the ventilation was still excellent. Both screens and the rainfly also toggle open or shut as needed, which let me batten down the hatches in a squall. The memory foam mattress was thin but dreamy, and the ladder, which stores separately from the tent, was easy to deploy. It’s rated for two people and three seasons, but in plenty of places this tent can be used year-round. Add Thule’s quilted Insulator tent liner if you really want to extend your season for using the Foothill. –BB

