

GEARED UP ▶▶▶

Kaden Primo Maternity Chamois Shorts, \$108

kadenapparel.com

One of the most frustrating aspects of the fourth trimester is the discovery (for first-time parents at least) that your pre-pregnancy clothes do not fit or won't fit for quite some time. Especially if you like to be active and are eager to get back to some movement. Maternity bike shorts are such a great idea and so wildly helpful for moms to start to feel like themselves again. I didn't get a chance to use these shorts during my pregnancy because I got them a little too late before delivering, but I have been using them religiously post-partum. It has been a huge relief to be able to recreate since having a baby (after a good amount of time and pelvic floor physical therapy — don't skip the PT!). None of my pre-pregnancy bike apparel fits me anymore, and while I've ditched many of my maternity clothes with belly bands, I love the snug compression that these bike shorts provide. I feel secure in them, and they fit true to size. I love that the belly band is a comfortable and smooth material that you can also fold as your body changes over time. My only suggestion is that the pocket be open rather than have a flap for easier access. —SH



Topeak Alien X, \$75

topeak.com

Figuring out which tools to bring on tour is always a challenge. I try to balance having what I need without weighing myself down. Topeak's Alien X has helped me find that balance. Seven ounces sounds heavy, but the Alien X has so many of the tools I want to have with me on the trail, many of which are specific to modern bikes that older multitools don't have. The Alien X has a valve core puller and quick link pliers. To use the pliers, unclip the two sides of the Alien X, each of which has one side of the pliers. With the two halves of the tool separated, the sides of the pliers mate for breaking links. Alien X also has spoke wrenches, hex wrenches, a knife, Torx wrenches, disc spacer, driver bits, chain breaker, and a metal tire lever — 34 functions in all. It's compact but big enough that I had leverage cranking on rusty cleat bolts and more. And there are pockets under the tools on each side to store a chain pin or quick link. I wish the knife blade was bigger, but I appreciate it has a sleeve so I haven't accidentally cut myself when using neighboring tools. I've had earlier versions of the Topeak Alien that were good tools, but too bulky to bring on my bike. Since I got it three months ago, I carry the Alien X with me whenever I ride. —BB



Big Agnes Lost Ranger UL 3N1 0° Sleep System, \$650 bigagnes.com

As the name indicates, the Big Agnes Lost Ranger 3N1 is a three-in-one system consisting of an inner mummy bag and an outer quilt. There are a few iterations (Roxy Ann being the women's version) including UL (ultralight) tested here and non-UL, in 0°, 15°, and 30° ratings. The UL models are made of lighter materials with 850-fill down, whereas the non-UL models have 650-fill, and the temperature ratings refer to the system as a whole. For example, the UL 0° tested here includes an inner mummy bag rated to 20°F, the outer quilt rated to 45°F, and 0°F when you put them together. It's not a new idea — the sleep system issued to me in the Marines consisted of a warm-weather inner bag that zipped into a heavy-duty outer bag for colder weather, as well as a Gore-Tex bivy bag — but its level of execution earns it high marks.

Starting with the quilt, I love — *love* — the pad attachment system. It's simple, easy to use, and any weight or bulk it adds is well worth it. The quilt features a single two-way zip on the side and a pillow barn, which is a little sleeve to keep your pillow in place. It's a great idea and works very well, although I found the thin nylon material makes my face sweaty (I'm a side sleeper). I ended up either keeping my pillow on top of the "barn" or laying my merino Buff on top. The quilt is roomy and lofted well, and I found the 45°F rating to be largely accurate, although it would be warmer if the neck cinch worked better. The quilt has a cinch cord on either side, and I found they would come loose during the night as I rolled from side to side, allowing the warm air to escape. One of the cinch cords also popped out of its hole, but luckily I was able to tie it to a nearby nylon loop, the purpose of which escapes me.

The inner mummy bag is of minimalist design: it features a three-quarter, two-way center zip, a hood, and ... well, that's about it. The hood doesn't even have a cinch. It's a pretty tight bag, so if you prefer roomy sleeping bags, you might want to look elsewhere. But it's comfortable, at least for this side-sleeper, and very warm. Its 20°F rating is spot on, and it packs down pretty small. I used the inner mummy bag on its own for a number of chilly nights and never felt underprepared.

Putting the two together makes for a truly warm setup. It can be a small logistical challenge to crawl inside and get zipped up — zip the inner bag up partway, then zip the quilt up, then zip the inner bag the rest of the way — but once you're in, it's a very cozy place to be. It helps a lot that the outer quilt is roomy enough that you can freely roll around in the mummy bag. One of the best nights of camping I've ever had was in an island mountain range at the Nevada-Utah border earlier this year, doing a little spring skiing. I slept under the stars cowboy-style during a very chilly, cloudless night, with the full Lost Ranger cinched up tight, and let me tell you, I was warm and cozy.

It's hard to overlook the Lost Ranger's price: \$650 for the 0° UL is a lot of money, but just like the name says, you are getting three sleeping bags in one. In that sense, you could argue that the Lost Ranger is a bargain. And you can save a good chunk of money if you want a higher temperature rating or opt for the non-UL versions. The Lost Ranger 3N1 0° non-UL, for example, is \$420, and the Roxy Ann 3N1 30° non-UL is \$330. —DM





Whisky Milhouse Bar, \$235

whiskyparts.co

The Whisky Milhouse is a great solution for riders who want their hands in an upright, relaxed position, but (like me) can't stand the sight of a giant stack of stem spacers. Where most MTB-style handlebars top out at 30mm of rise, the Milhouse has a whopping 70mm, negating the need for a tower of spacers, and it also has a crossbar for a stylish moto/BMX look. The Milhouse is pretty wide at 825mm, with an 8° upsweep and 16° backsweep. There are a few other handlebars on the market with a similar style, but two things set the Milhouse apart: one, it has a 31.8mm clamp diameter, so there's no need for a shim; and two, it's made of carbon, so all that extra real estate for your hands doesn't come with a weight penalty. (It does, however, come with a cost penalty — \$235 is a lot of money for a handlebar.) I typically cut my flat bars to 780mm, but I found the Milhouse comfortable right away and decided not to chop it down. Mounted on my Kona Unit X, it puts my hands a little higher than my saddle, which is a nice commanding, upright position to be in. The width also gives you a ton of leverage, although the high backsweep makes the Milhouse feel not quite as wide as the numbers would suggest. I found it to be a very comfortable bar for both cruising down casual doubletrack and riding twisty singletrack (watch out for tight trees, though!). It also helps that the Milhouse has a bit of flex to it.

Another benefit to the Milhouse is that its enormous rise keeps your controls and housing out of the way of bikepacking bags. I've mostly used a Road Runner Jumbo Jammer strapped to the Milhouse, and even without spacers, my cables and brake lines don't get pinched or bunched up at all. —DM



Park Tool Sliding T-Handle Torx Compatible Wrench Set, \$124

parktool.com

Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between getting your bike back on the road quickly and being without two wheels for too long. While most bike tools that riders carry in their pocket or pack come with one or two Torx wrenches, more bikes are now using Torx bolts of other sizes that require wrenches you may not have. That's what prompted me to pick up this eight-wrench set. It has all the Torx wrenches a cyclist needs to loosen and tighten star-shaped bolts. The T-handle slides, which gives the ability to sneak the wrench into tight-fitting spaces. The T also provides more leverage when bolts are stuck. Each wrench has three Torx-compatible tips, two on the handle and one on the shaft. The tool shaft also has an aluminum anodized speed spinner that makes extracting longer bolts super efficient. It allows you to twist the wrench with one hand while holding the sleeve with the other, stabilizing the wrench in the bolt until you're done. This set comes in a plastic tool holder that hangs on the wall or attaches to a peg board. And if you're looking for a set of hex wrenches, Park's sister set to this Torx set is just as good. —BB

ABD Culture Recycled Rubber Jewelry, \$31 and up alixandrabarron.com

Are you searching for the perfect gift for a fellow cyclist, a “you got this” present for yourself, or the perfect accessory to go with spandex and sweat? Vermont-based Alixandra Barron Designs (ABD) makes beautiful and original earrings, bracelets, and necklaces from laser-cut, blown-out bike tubes. It’s jewelry that’s in sync with the cycling lifestyle, for both men and women. Her designs go beyond the feather bike tube earrings that were all the rage a decade ago. ABD earrings and cuffs come in all shapes and sizes. I typically don’t wear jewelry when I’m cycling – I save it for *après*. But ABD earrings are light, flexible, and fun. They don’t absorb sweat. They’re tough. And even ABD’s biggest styles don’t interfere with a helmet strap. The unisex cuff bracelets slip under or over bike gloves. And whatever your preferred design, whether it’s the starfish or flower bouquet earring, or the bamboo or hops rubber bracelets, ABD accessories are pretty much guaranteed to put a smile on your face, make you feel more human when you haven’t showered for days, and get you compliments. ABD also makes select designs in sterling silver. Earrings are for pierced ears only. –BB



Abus Bordo 6500A SmartX Folding Lock, \$270 abus.com

I like to think I’m somewhat protected by the cycling angels after fighting for my sister’s honor, and her stolen bicycle, back around 1987, but that only goes so far, so I was excited to hear about this new smart lock from Abus. It’s heavy, but it works great for peace of mind while my mountain bike, the most expensive bike I’ve ever owned, hangs in my garage or while I take my eBike out to run errands around town. Given its weight (just over five pounds), it’s a hefty load for long-distance bike trips where weight counts most, plus the need for a charged phone in order to unlock it can be an unwarranted stress for long tours when you may not have access to charging stations. But for shorter trips, or for urban or inn-to-inn bicycle travel, this lock makes a ton of sense – and a ton of noise. When I first set up this keyless lock, I hadn’t yet downloaded the app to unlock it (or read the instructions), so when the alarm went off, I blasted my eardrums trying to get the app set up so I could turn it off. The good news is, it’s abrasive enough that most bike thieves would leave the lock alone. The even better news is, unless you really mess with the lock, the alarm just gives one annoying warning beep. So someone can bump into the lock accidentally while locking up their bike nearby, or a kid can toss a ball that bounces into the lock, and it won’t set off a 100-decibel alarm that only you can deactivate. It comes with a holster that mounts to your bike frame so you also don’t have to worry about a five-pound lock weighing down a bike bag, or backpack. The Abus Bordo 6500A SmartX isn’t for every occasion where bike safety is concerned, but it’s certainly a great option for those who are concerned about bike safety. –CW