



## Hikers Brew Coffee, \$27 for 6-Pack Sampler

[hikersbrewcoffee.com](http://hikersbrewcoffee.com)

➔ I'm not typically a flavored coffee person. Not to be "that guy," but I love regular black coffee, preferably light roast. So I was skeptical when a sample pack of flavored coffee arrived at my desk with four flavors (hazelnut, s'mores, caramel, vanilla), a medium roast, and a dark roast. I have to admit I was wrong though, because these flavors are mild, aromatic, and fun. Making the camp-side pour over, my heart was all atwist worried about the explosive hazelnut flavor, but once I drank it, it tasted deliciously like coffee. Same with all the other flavors. The aroma was there enough to give a mild and enjoyable hint of a flavor when sipping, but it didn't interfere with the smooth coffee. Also, the regular and dark roasts were also smooth, mild, and not burnt the way other dark roasts can taste to me. These easy-to-pack pouches made their way into every packed bag I had this fall. At 1.5 ounces, I found their size to be a bit large for little 'ole me, so I wish there was an easy way to reseal them (a small binder clip or rubber band did the trick), but I appreciated the lack of plastic and think that's a fine trade-off. One packet filled a French press perfectly, so they're great if you aren't in a rush to pack up or (as the cute illustrations on the packets suggest I find) have a friend to share in your morning ritual. —Carolyn Whelan



## Park Tool Magnetic Parts Bowl, \$11

[parktool.com](http://parktool.com)

➔ Do you drop small parts when you're working on your bike? Do you lose washers, valve cores, cleat bolts, bearings, and other SMO (small metal objects) while your bike is in the stand, your hands are covered with grease, and there's a bunch of junk on your workbench? Park Tool's Magnetic Parts Bowl has made bike repair easier for me because it gives me a place to put those SMOs until I need them. The bowl is classic Park Tool blue, six inches in diameter, and has a strong magnet embedded in the base. That magnet not only keeps SMOs from bouncing away, but it also lets me store the bowl on the side of my metal toolbox. I bought two so that when I'm working on multiple projects, I can keep the parts separate. This bowl is so handy, I don't just use it when I'm wrenching on my bike, but when I'm tackling other household projects too. —Berne Broudy





### PDW Lucky Cat Cage, \$28

ridepdw.com

▶ Force yourself to smile on the next unrelenting climb, frigid early morning start, or a ride day when your body is sore, and the trail awaits you. PDW's five whimsical water bottle cages are just the thing to make you remember that cycling is fun, the world is a wonderful place, and you don't need to take your self-induced suffering too seriously. I currently have the Lucky Cat on my bike. The *maneki-neko* is beckoning luck and prosperity my way with its waving paw, just like the plastic gizmo found on cash registers and in restaurant windows in Japan and beyond. I love the Otter

Cage because the silly cage looks like an otter holding my water bottle on its belly. The Sparrow cage and Owl cage, which is modeled after a great horned owl, are a little more sophisticated and understated as well as totally cool. The wings hold my bottle. And the Very Good Dog? That cage might be the silliest of all. The dog's little pink tongue makes me smile every time I see it. There's no fancy new tech here. The two-ounce cages are cut from 5052 alloy sheet metal and painted. A percentage of sales of both the otter and the dog cages go to relevant charities. —BB



### Shimano RX8R Gravel Shoes, \$300

bike.shimano.com

▶ Gravel shoes have beefy soles, more like mountain bike shoes. But many gravel shoe uppers maintain road shoe-like design. They're cut low at the ankle, which means that when I'm walking, which I inevitably do at some point on most gravel tours, they tend to let sand, sticks, leaves, pebbles, and anything else the trail can dish up inside. Shimano

solves that problem with their new rally edition gravel racing shoe. Shimano added a knitted ankle cuff to its already awesome carbon-soled gravel shoe to make a light, efficient, and good-looking shoe that also keeps the junk out. The shoes tighten with Boa dial. On the bottom, they have abrasion-resistant TPU plastic lugs that had good traction walking. I liked how

the shoe upper wrapped my foot. It was secure and supportive as well as powerful and efficient. If a carbon sole sounds too stiff, this isn't the shoe for you. But if you find yourself stopping routinely to dump debris from your shoes, consider it. It's my new go-to for riding rugged gravel roads that are off the beaten track. —BB





**Rapha Lightweight Trail Pants, \$150**  
rapha.cc

▶ Lightweight trail pants have been around for a few years, but since I got Rapha's, the others have been pushed to the back of my closet. Rapha's Lightweight Trail Pants add a little warmth when I'm riding. They keep the mud off and a drizzle at bay, and they're as comfortable as my favorite trail shorts. And when I'm touring in a country where it's culturally appropriate to cover my legs, they add a little modesty. On a recent pedal through the Maritime Alps of France and Italy, I layered these pants over chamois shorts and chamois capris, and I always felt perfectly comfortable though the weather changed dramatically by the hour. The pants are made from four-way-stretch, abrasion-resistant nylon. They weigh 7.6 ounces in women's medium, and they're low profile with a stretchy snap waist that kept the pants up when I was pedaling without feeling restrictive. They're sewn for comfort on the bike, with articulated knees and reinforced cuffs with a stretchy back. The pants also repelled moisture and dried quickly thanks to a DWR treatment. The right thigh pocket held a plus-sized iPhone. I would have loved a left thigh pocket for snacks. For some incomprehensible reason, men get two pockets, but women only get one. I was pleased that the pants didn't get stinky even after multiple days on the bike. Bonus: Rapha includes color-matched, iron-on repair patches to extend the life of these pants. —BB



**CamelBak Kid's Mini M.U.L.E. Hydration Pack, \$55**  
camelbak.com

▶ The first things that caught our eyes on CamelBak's Kid's Mini M.U.L.E. were the mesh shoulder straps and the padded mesh back panel. The shoulder straps include a vertically adjustable sternum strap with a built-in safety whistle. The vertical adjustment is ideal because each child's chest width differs; this adjustability allows the strap to be closed above the sternum or below the stomach. The practical placement of the whistle ensures that in case of an emergency, the child could easily call for help. On the back, the Mini M.U.L.E. has two zippered pockets. The larger pocket holds a 1.5-liter hydration reservoir. The hydration reservoir hooks into a loop inside the pocket for a secure fit, and the opening includes a flat, ergonomic handle to make refilling a breeze. The hydration reservoir has a leak-proof on/off valve to prevent unintended leaks. The smaller pocket of the Mini M.U.L.E. can fit snacks, a small light, and maybe a bandana. We packed a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a

tangerine, and a small first aid kit.

On a hot and humid day, the Mini M.U.L.E. worked better than expected. My daughter sweated a little on her back, which was a stark improvement to her older hydration packs, which had a thick sponge backing that caused her to overheat quickly. Weeks later, when the temperatures dipped and nightfall came quickly, the horizontal strap connecting both shoulder straps in the back provided the perfect placement for her flickering taillight. It was easy to spot her riding her bike as dusk fell. The Mini M.U.L.E. is also easy to clean, dries quickly, and has no lingering smells. Like our previous hydration packs, the Mini M.U.L.E. was selected for its size to ensure that the pack would fit a child's smaller body. We anticipated that this would be an improvement, but we were blown away by the ingenuity and practicality of every feature of this pack. —Elizabeth McFarland (pictured) and Taneika Duhaney



## Red Shift Kitchen Sink Loop Handlebar, \$140

redshiftsports.com

▶ I was interested in checking out the Kitchen Sink Loop bar to solve two problems with my otherwise beloved touring rig: one, because of my short torso, the reach has always been a bit too ... reachy; and two, when I strap a handlebar bag or sleep system to the cockpit, I find that my headlight can get obstructed. The Kitchen Sink bars immediately solved the first problem better than I'd hoped. The bars have a 7° backsweep and a 20mm rise that made my bike fit perfectly for the first time since I acquired it in 2015. The compact drops were also positioned perfectly, giving me just the

ideal hand positions for some serious climbs during a tour in Alaska and the Yukon.

While I typically run 440mm bars, I followed the company's advice and ordered the size up, 470mm, and was happy I did. I also found the loop to be a fantastic alternative to aero bars during flat road sections when I was trying to just get through some serious miles and adjust my hands and weight. I wish I had known of such a simple solution to my overall comfort seven years ago, but I'm glad I came across it now. The bag (\$50 with computer mount), meanwhile, fits in the hollow space between the bars and

endurance loop snugly, working as an easy place to store grabbables (phone, snacks, gloves) without taking up the space you may want to use to hold a sleep roll or a larger front bag. Plus, the bag itself comes with an optional mount for a cycling computer, and the bars give plenty of space for mounting a light, so there's no more finicking with trying to see over my front bag. While I repurposed the tape I was using on my previous bars and it fit just fine, Red Shift also sells ergonomic grips (\$50 for tops and bottoms) and extra-long bar tape (\$40) to wrap up everything. —CW



## Scrubba Wash Bag, \$55

thescrubba.com, adventurecycling.org/store

▶ Bike tours aren't always conducive to washing clothes. Rinsing bike shorts in a stream of water from a CamelBak is not effective, at least in my experience. When I'm traveling, I often don't find myself near a laundromat, and if I do, I don't want to spend the time sitting through wash and dry cycles when I could be pedaling or exploring instead. Scrubba is a waterproof stuff sack with a flexible washboard inside that lets me get my clothes relatively clean when it's convenient for me. I add a little bit of laundry soap and water to my clothes and rub the sides of the Scrubba bag together for a couple of minutes to loosen dirt, salt, sweat, and

smell. Then, I drain, rinse, and repeat. The bag lets me deal with laundry once I'm at my destination for the night or when I'm in a beautiful spot where I want to hang out for a while. It also lets me do laundry responsibly. I use biodegradable soap and always drain my laundry bag far from any water source. The 5.3-ounce Scrubba sack doubles as a dry bag to hold wet clothes until I can dry them, to store dirty clothes until I can wash them, or as extra storage lashed to a bike bag or my handlebars. It's big enough for a chamois, shirt, socks, bra, and one or two additional thin and compact pieces per load. Also available in Cyclosource. —BB