

»In the lab«

RUCKSACKS

26 of them, tested on the road then attacked in the lab

Words **Olly Crick** Pictures **Paul Bryant**



How we did it

A good rucksack is an essential bit of kit for most riders, whether it's carrying a laptop and a sarnie to work or a weekend's clothes. The difference between a bad one and a good one can be massive. That's where RiDE comes in. We've tested 26 rucksacks against the key criteria, judging their basic waterproofing and whether the straps are strong enough.

Rucksacks should strap securely to your back and not move around while riding, whether empty or full. You also have a right to expect the contents not to get wet within minutes of it starting to rain, and that the straps will survive the strain of life at the speed limit.

We road tested each rucksack for hundreds of miles and then inspected them and scored them out of 10, awarding marks for everything from ease of adjustment to comfort.

To test the strength of the straps we devised a simple fall-arrest rig where rucksacks were loaded with 6kg then suspended by their straps and allowed to free-fall for

one metre before being brought to an abrupt stop. This tests how well the straps are fixed to the bag.

This test was done three times and the damage assessed. Bags that survived all three tests with no damage scored 10/10, those which showed a light pull on the stitching scored nine, bags with stitching that partly ripped out got six, those with part-torn straps picked up two points and we awarded a solitary point to those whose straps tore off.

Our waterproofing test was designed to simulate being caught out in a shower, hence we didn't use any waterproof covers that may be included with the bags. We sprayed each bag for four minutes with a pressure washer and checked for leaks. Bags scored 10 for being leak-free, on a sliding scale down to one.

Capacity was measured with 1kg bags of sugar, but this part of the test was not scored and is included for information only. The roomiest rucksack held 25 sugar bags and the smallest held just six.

1= Kriega R25

Price £79
Capacity 15 bags of sugar
Contact 01829 741223 or www.kriega.com

Tester's notes

A durable, excellent-quality rucksack that some testers at RiDE have been using for years. It offers great comfort thanks to thick back and strap padding. The only downside is that it can be awkward to carry items in your jacket breast pocket because of the rucksack's front clasp arrangement. The R25 easily passed the fall-arrest strap test with no damage at all and stayed dry in our waterproofing test. It will eventually leak while riding through prolonged rain, like most others.



Road testing	████████████████████	19/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	████████████████████	10/10
Total	████████████████████	39/40



4= Oxford Xpert Aeropack

Price £40
Capacity 20 bags of sugar
Contact 01993 862300 or www.oxprod.com

Tester's notes

The road tester praised the bag's comfort, but said the straps slip open when getting it on, making readjustment necessary before each use. The bag is expandable via an all-round zip and the base unzips to reveal a helmet carrier. The sack stayed dry throughout the waterproofing test and the straps remained undamaged by our strength check.



Road testing	████████████████████	16/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	████████████████████	10/10
Total	████████████████████	36/40

4= Vanucci Race Hard Shell

Price £90
Capacity 10 bags of sugar
Contact 0845 017 5007 or www.setseared.co.uk

Tester's notes

This bag is comfortable to use, but a cover on the zip proved unnecessarily fiddly in the eyes of our road tester and the bag's shape makes it awkward to load up. There was no damage at all after strap test and the bag was dry after the waterproofing test but water leaked in from the zip area when we opened it. The bag has an inside laptop compartment and pockets for keys and pens etc, and there's an integral waterproof cover in the bottom. There are pockets on the waistband as well.



Road testing	████████████████████	16/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	████████████████████	10/10
Total	████████████████████	36/40

1= Ogio No Drag

Price £120
Capacity 12 bags of sugar
Contact 01908 326002 or www.ultimatepursuits.co.uk

Tester's notes

This bag features a helmet carrying system of hood and straps, lots of inner pockets for a laptop etc and an audio pocket with outlet/inlet port. It's also guaranteed for 30 years. It didn't leak a drop in the waterproofing test and showed no problems at all with the strap test, surviving intact. Our road tester's only gripe was that the contents need to be loaded from the rear. The main zip is next to the rider's back and it can be awkward to get stuff in under the straps.



Road testing	████████████████████	19/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	████████████████████	10/10
Total	████████████████████	39/40



3 Knox Six Pack

Price £40
Capacity 17 bags of sugar
Contact 01900 825825 or www.planet-knox.com

Tester's notes

Knox's bag has lots of internal pockets and is comfortable in use but its large main buckle is positioned where it could scratch a petrol tank, and the straps are a little awkward to adjust through the buckles. It didn't leak at all in our waterproofing test and suffered no damage in our strap strength test. The front panel zips around three sides for easy access when loading.



Road testing	████████████████████	18/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	████████████████████	10/10
Total	████████████████████	38/40

6= Vanucci Race

Price £50
Capacity 9 bags of sugar
Contact 0845 017 5007 or www.setseared.co.uk

Tester's notes

This expandable rucksack is fiddly to get on but comfortable once it's there. It has an integral waterproof cover in the top. There are internal pockets and a key holder plus small waistband pockets for credit cards etc. It remained completely dry in our waterproofing test and showed no damage after the strap strength test. It's an awkward shape to pack and the straps are a little stiff to adjust.



Road testing	████████████████████	14/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	████████████████████	10/10
Total	████████████████████	34/40

6= Teknic Sportspack

Price £60
Capacity 16 bags of sugar
Contact 02476 705444

Tester's notes

Plenty of stuff will fit in this bag, which is comfortable and easy to use. The straps are awkward to adjust, but our road tester liked everything else. The bag leaked two tablespoons of water during the waterproofing test. It comes with an integral storm hood that's easy to access and use. The shoulder straps survived the strap test with no damage, and the carrying handle is a robust rubber item.



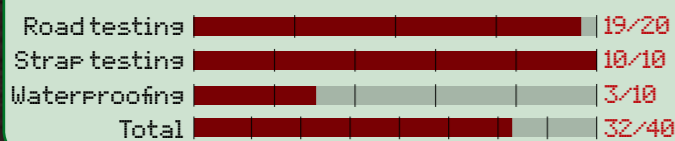
Road testing	████████████████████	19/20
Strap testing	████████████████████	10/10
Waterproofing	██████████████████	5/10
Total	████████████████████	34/40

8= Oxford Sports OF575

Price £79
Capacity 18 bags of sugar
Contact 01993 862300 or
www.oxprod.com

Tester's notes

Our road tester rated this bag as comfortable, easy to use and spacious, although the waist strap is extremely long and the excess whips around in the wind. A huge front pocket zips open to reveal a helmet carrier. The straps survived our strength test intact but the main compartment leaked a quarter of a cupful in the waterproof test, which stops it getting into the top bracket of the rankings.



8= Spyke Vicky

Price £42
Capacity 10 bags of sugar
Contact 01384 413841 or
www.feridax.com

Tester's notes

Comfortable, small-capacity rucksack with lots of pockets inside and a pocket with an audio inlet/outlet port on the front. It was a lack of capacity that our road tester disliked most. It has a zip-out waterproof cover stored in the top, but tested without it the bag leaked one tablespoon into the main compartment in the waterproofing test. It completed the strap test with no damage at all.

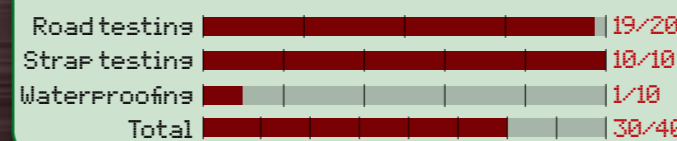


11= Hein Gericke Small

Price £25
Capacity 10 bags of sugar
Contact 0800 165165 or
www.hein-gericke.co.uk

Tester's notes

Its comfort and ease of use were praised by the road tester, who raised no real problems with this small bag other than a fiddly waistband adjustment system that meant ours kept coming undone. The strap strength test was more of a challenge as both straps ripped half-through on the first drop and then tore off completely on the second drop. It stayed dry in the waterproofing test.



13= Alpinestars Tech Aero

Price £100
Capacity 11 bags of sugar
Contact www.alpinestars.com

Tester's notes

This bag is comfortable in use but fiddly to adjust. The front pocket becomes a helmet carrier when unzipped and the main compartment has a waterproof zip that helped the bag stay dry in the waterproofing test. It has lots of pockets, room for a laptop inside and it's expandable at the rear. The first drop of the strap test resulted in some stitching pulling away in one shoulder strap anchor point, but this didn't get any worse with subsequent drops.

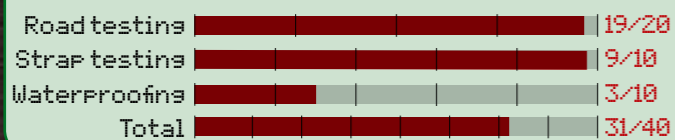


10= Hein Gericke Touring

Price £25
Capacity 15 bags of sugar
Contact 0800 165165 or
www.hein-gericke.co.uk

Tester's notes

The road tester gave this a great review, describing it as comfortable and easy to adjust, with metal press studs that hold the zips in place and stop them undoing. It has waist and chest straps and waistband pockets for credit cards etc. Our technical tests gave a slightly less positive picture as the stitching pulled slightly on the outside edge of one strap in the strength test and it leaked a quarter of a cup in the waterproofing test.



11= BMW Motorrad Function

Price £90
Capacity 12 bags of sugar
Contact 0800 777155 or
www.worldofbmw.com

Tester's notes

A huge front pocket on this bag becomes a helmet carrier. The main bag has a pull-cord top, which can be awkward when loading. In the first drop of the strap test some stitching broke on the left shoulder strap, but it didn't get any worse with the subsequent two drops. It remained dry in the waterproofing test. Our road tester rated it as comfortable and easy to use.

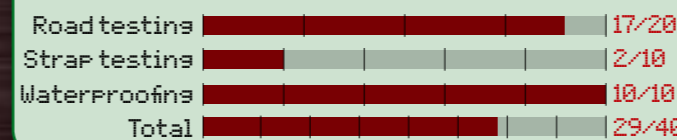


13= Joe Rocket Blaster Backpack

Price £30
Capacity 20 bags of sugar
Contact 01425 620580 or
www.tranam.co.uk

Tester's notes

A hard oval section on the front of this comfortable and easily adjusted rucksack zips open to become a helmet holder. It also features an inlet/outlet for audio cables at the top of the main compartment, a chest strap and waist strap. It was completely dry after our waterproofing test. In the strap strength test one strap tore one-third through, while the other strap just started to go at the outside edge.

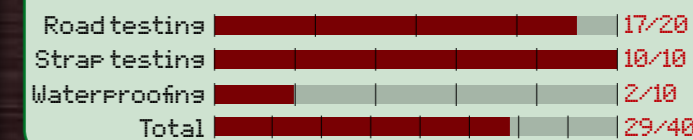


13= Hein Gericke Pro Sports Race

Price £25
Capacity 8 bags of sugar
Contact 0800 165165 or
www.hein-gericke.co.uk

Tester's notes

Stayed completely dry in the waterproofing test and did well in the road test, where it was described as expandable, comfortable and easy to use. But the strap test progressively pulled the main bag fabric away from the back panel. After three drops one corner had pulled away 100mm horizontally and 80mm vertically. The other corner had a 40mm split in the material.



13 Ixon X-ceed

Price £46
Capacity 16 bags of sugar*
Contact 01923 772273

Tester's notes

Our road tester described it as awkward and said it caught on their jacket while putting it on, but it was comfortable once there. In the strap test the first drop destroyed a plastic clip that the strap relies on to work. It stayed dry in the waterproofing test.

*There's room for another seven bags of sugar in a huge bottom pocket, but any weight stored there will be carried by the zip.



17 AGV Sport Technical

Price £40
Capacity 18 bags of sugar
Contact 0870 442 8399

Tester's notes

The strap test proved the undoing of this bag as the straps ripped progressively on the first and second drops and completely ripped off on the third drop. It sailed through the waterproofing test, and this well appointed bag - featuring lots of pockets, a zip-out helmet holder and both a waist strap and a removable chest strap - did well in the road test. It's comfortable, roomy and easy to use, but the straps are not as strong as many others on test.

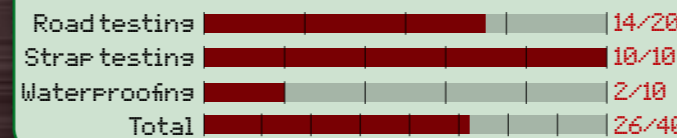


20 Buffalo Getaway

Price £15
Capacity 15 bags of sugar
Contact 01425 277788 or
www.bifax.co.uk

Tester's notes

It's comfortable and easy to use but would be better with a chest strap. It leaked a third of a cupful during the waterproofing test, so you'd need to use the waterproof cover that's stored in the bottom pocket. It survived the fall-arrest test without damage. The big front pocket has provision for keys and a mobile phone. Not a bad option for the money, once the storm cover is in place.

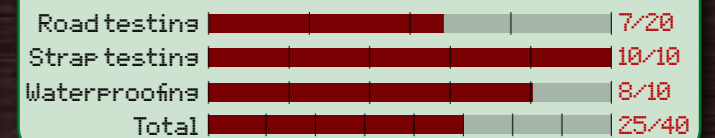


21 Hein Gericke Tuareg

Price £25
Capacity 19 bags of sugar
Contact 0800 165165 or
www.hein-gericke.co.uk

Tester's notes

The road test report did the most damage here, as the bag was criticised for holding the weight too high on the rider's back and having a fiddly securing system for the main section, plus a chest strap that sat too high. It showed no damage in the strap test and leaked only a tiny dribble into one bottom corner during the waterproofing test.



18 STR Lindstrands Backpack

Price £40
Capacity 6 bags of sugar
Contact www.iofama.se

Tester's notes

Our road tester found it awkward to get over their jacket sleeves and criticised a chest strap that sits very high. It leaked a tiny dribble in the waterproofing test. The straps just started to pull away at the edges during the strength test, by around 3mm from each outer edge. Its carrying capacity is also an issue as this rucksack was at its capacity when it held six bags of sugar. There's an integral water pouch and drinking tube.



18 Oxford Explorer Aeropack

Price £25
Capacity 20 bags of sugar
Contact 01993 862300 or
www.oxprod.com

Tester's notes

This basic PVC bag suffered no damage at all in the strap strength test, but it leaked two tablespoons during the waterproofing test. It appears to be designed to be waterproof, but the fold-over top doesn't form a proper seal. Road testing revealed it to be fairly uncomfortable to wear, especially when heavily loaded. A lack of pockets means it's hard to find anything because it's all packed in the same cavity.

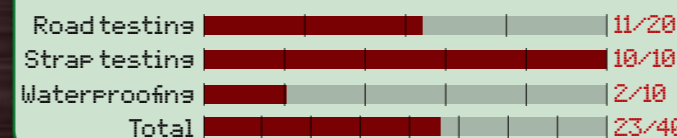


22 Moto Detail Office

Price £40
Capacity 17 bags of sugar
Contact 0845 017 5007 or
www.getgeared.co.uk

Tester's notes

Rated by our tester as uncomfortable in use and awkward to adjust. There are so many pockets and compartments inside that the bag resembles a compartmentalised filing system. It leaked five tablespoons in the waterproof test but completed the strap test without damage. It comes with a robust rubber carrying handle.

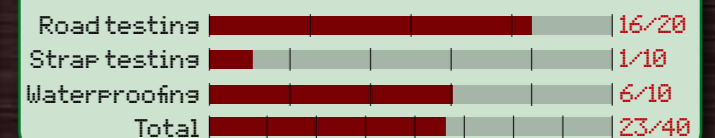


22 Ixon X-plode

Price £38
Capacity 15 bags of sugar
Contact 01923 772273

Tester's notes

This bag leaked one tablespoon during the waterproofing test, so it's best to make sure you don't lose the separate waterproof bag that comes with it. The first drop of our strap test ripped one strap almost completely off and the other side had started to pull off so subsequent drops were aborted. It's a fiddle to adjust the straps to fit, but our road tester described it as comfortable while riding.

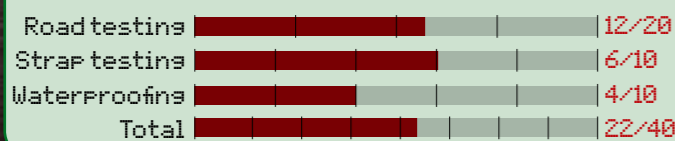


24 Tech 7 Backpack

Price £20
Capacity 20 bags of sugar
Contact 0871 919 2900 or
www.bustersclassic.co.uk

Tester's notes

The waterproofing test resulted in three tablespoons of water reaching the bottom of the main compartment, and after the third drop of the strap test the stitching had just started to pull away. The bag comes with an integral waterproof cover and helmet carrier plus lots of internal pockets. It's awkward to adjust to fit, but is reasonably comfortable once you're on the move.

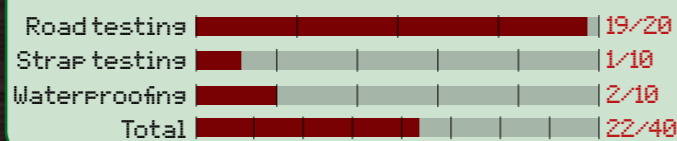


24 Kriega R20

Price £59
Capacity 9 bags of sugar
Contact 01829 741223 or
www.kriega.com

Tester's notes

It delivered a great road test, proving comfortable and easy to get on with, but it's let down by its waterproofing and strap design. It leaked a third of a cupful into the main compartment in the waterproofing test. The straps rely on a tiny plastic clip to hold them in place, and they snapped on the first drop of the fall-arrest test, which rendered the strap useless.

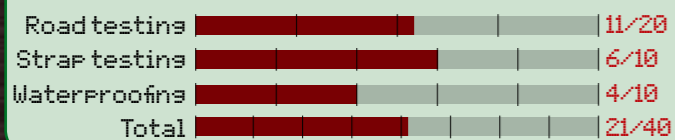


26 Sidi Colorado

Price £43
Capacity 14 bags of sugar
Contact 01384 413841 or
www.feridax.com

Tester's notes

The straps progressively pulled away from the edges with each drop of the fall-arrest test, finishing up pulling stitching out by 10mm from each outer edge. It leaked three tablespoons in the waterproofing test so it's handy that there's an integral waterproof cover in the bottom of the bag. It's comfortable to use, but the straps are a fiddle to adjust.



! THE VERDICT

The Kriega R25 is RiDE's Best Buy thanks to a great performance in all categories. The Ogio No Drag collects a RiDE Recommended triangle after finishing second because it has slightly less capacity and an unorthodox method of loading from the side, although you'd soon get used to it. Other high-scoring rucksacks didn't win Recommended triangles for a variety of reasons. Some are tricky to adjust to get the right fit, or have a shape that's awkward to pack, while others leave paintwork vulnerable to scratches or let water in after opening the zip.



NEXT MONTH

Locks and chains get the full RiDE product test treatment.