



Most wanted
MBLIK

Santa Cruz Palmdale grips £17.99

These are some of the comfiest grips out there, making them the go-to handholds for several of our testers. A single lock-on collar with a 3mm bolt clamps the grip tightly in place and ensures twist-free use even in sodden conditions. The outside edge of the grip has a slight taper to it, which isn't noticeable in use but means you can sit your hand right at the end of the bar in total comfort. With a diameter of 31mm they're pretty thin, but the soft rubber used stops your hands feeling battered even after roughed-up alpine descents. The knurled pattern and tacky rubber help keep your hands in place, while the raised Santa Cruz logo and lines on the underside add a bit of extra purchase for pulling up on the bar. With a choice of 12 colours and costing less than £20, the Palmdales are hard not to like. **Rob**

www.jungleproducts.co.uk

MBLIK ★★★★★

Ritchey WCS Carbon Trail Rizer 35 handlebar £160

Ritchey's finishing kit has been around for decades, but their top-line WCS bar shows they're keeping pace, with a great shape and good feel. The 780mm width will be enough for the majority of trail riders, and should you wish to go narrower, cutting guides make it easy to lop up to 40mm off each end. With a nine-degree backsweep and middle-of-the-road upsweep, nothing funny happens to the feel of the bar when you rotate it, so it's easy to get it feeling right. At 297g, it isn't super-light for a carbon bar, but on a trail bike its comfort is just right. It doesn't feel floppy when you're pushing hard with it at its full width, but it's nicely damped, which reduces hand and arm fatigue during long days on the hill. The textured 35mm-diameter centre section helps reduce the risk of the bar spinning in the stem, but the alignment guide could do with being wider. **Tom**

www.paligap.cc

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Smoove chain lube £13.99

Smoove lube is expensive but since the trails have got dirty it's proven worth the high price. It's a waxy lubricant that needs to be left to set (for at least an hour, ideally overnight) on a totally clean chain. Don't apply too much, because Smoove recommend you don't wipe the chain down afterwards, so the thick mix can clog up jockey wheels. The solidified wax doesn't attract muck and grit like a wet lube though, and it makes the chain spookily quiet when you back-pedal it. Critically, it keeps chains quiet and smooth for far longer than most other lubes we've used, with no end-of-day squeak and chatter even in sodden conditions. It'll even last through a hose-down (not jet-wash), ready to go again, rust and chatter free. Helping to offset the high price is its ability to stop premature wear on painfully pricey wide-range cassettes. **Guy**

www.clyclorise.com

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