

TESTED WINTER GLOVES



It's cold and it's raining so which of the nine pairs of gloves we've tested this month are best designed to cope with a British winter?

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A close-up photograph of a brown leather motorcycle glove. The glove features a 'SPADA' brand logo on the wrist and 'FRANK TYD' branding on the back of the hand. The glove has a textured palm side and a smooth leather back side. It is shown in a flexed position, highlighting its construction and stitching.

SPADA

PART 1
£60 OR
LESS

Burst testing: the only way to assess the strength of seams



Preparing the gloves for the burst test



Waterproofing: trial by jet-washer

Destruction and performance tests reveal the best gloves

A pair of gloves is one of the most important pieces of motorcycling kit we can buy. They need to give us the fine feel necessary for controlling the bike well, they need the strength and armour necessary if the worst happens and we come off and, at this time of year, they also need to keep our mits warm and dry. That's a lot to ask for. So we've set out to find the best winter gloves - in two price bands. This month, the 'budget' pack with pairs costing £60 or less. For expensive gloves, see next month.

Road testing

Winter gloves are often bulky and awkward due to the amount of material in them to keep hands warm and dry, but they should still be comfortable. To test them the RiDE team wore them while riding for hundreds of miles in a variety of weather conditions.

We consider a good glove to be one that goes on easily, is supple and comfortable from the start, keeps your hand warm and dry, allows proper use of the controls and doesn't turn inside out when you

take it off. After wearing the gloves while riding they were then subjected to several lab tests.

Warmth

To see how the gloves keep cold at bay, we put a steel rod into the middle finger of each glove and placed it in a chest freezer. With the cuff sealed and temperature sensitive probes called thermocouples attached to the artificial finger, we recorded how far the temperature dropped over a five-minute period. Comparing results showed which gloves gave the best insulation.

Waterproofing

If your gloves leak, their insulating properties will be ruined because the tiny pockets of air separating you from the cold, will fill with water. Not only do you now have no insulation, but the water conducts away what little heat you have left.

To test for waterproofing the gloves were worn by a tester on a stationary bike and subjected to a controlled, three-minute jet-washer torrent. While being doused, the

tester operated the bike's controls to aggravate seams. The tester wore satin inner gloves so leaks could be detected and recorded. A waterproof oversuit was worn over the glove cuffs so cuff leakage was eliminated and wouldn't confuse the results.

Abrasion resistance

To test well the gloves would protect your hands in a slide down the road, each one was opened flat and secured, palm down, on a metal anvil. The anvil was then dropped onto a moving abrasive belt and the time it took for the glove to wear through was recorded. The longer a glove lasts in this test, the more protection it offers.

Seam strength

Making a glove out of the toughest material is no good unless it's well stitched together and will stay in one piece in a crash. Seam strength was measured with a burst test, where a sample from the outside edge of each glove was clamped over a rubber diaphragm that was inflated until either the material tore or the stitching gave way. The higher the pressure of the diaphragm at the point of failure,

the stronger the glove seams and marks were awarded accordingly.

Wrist restraint

The best seam strength and abrasion resistance is useless if the glove comes off in a crash. To see how effective the wrist restraints were, we used a digital balance to measure the force needed to pull the glove off a tester's hand. The tester had the glove done up comfortably tight and kept his hand relaxed during the test. The average force over three tests was taken.

Impact protection

Rolling down the road with flailing arms will have your hands bouncing off tarmac, so without decent padding you could break a knuckle. To measure the impact protection provided by the gloves, a 2.5kg striker was dropped onto the first and second knuckles and then onto the third and fourth knuckles of each glove as it sat above a knuckle-shaped anvil. A sensor beneath the anvil told us how much force was absorbed by the glove armour and how much would be transferred to the rider's hand. The less force transferred the better.

THE PERFECT WINTER GLOVE

VISOR WIPING

Winter means water and dirty roads. A visor-wipe blade or a suede (or at least suede-effect) finger can be very useful for shifting road-grime from your visor while riding.

MATERIALS

Leather, man-made artificial leather or textile is just the start of it. Is the outer layer water-repellant? What kind of waterproof membrane is fitted? What kind of insulation padding has been used?

PROTECTION

Gloves are safety equipment. That means armour should absorb impact, outer layers should withstand abrasion, seams should remain secure when stretched.



PALMS

Should be padded for warmth, but reinforcement with a tough material like stingray skin will give good abrasion resistance if a hand is put out in a crash.

FASTENINGS

A wrist strap will ensure a secure fit, so the glove is less likely to be ripped off in a crash. The cuff fastening is more about comfort and should close securely, keeping drafts out.

FINGERS

Precurved fingers make for a better fit on the controls. Too much padding - which is needed for warmth - may limit movement and compromise feel.

 OVERALL
 53/70
 RATING


Spada Enforcer £44.99

Contact: 01384 413841 or www.feridax.com

1 TESTER'S NOTES: The top scorers in the abrasion test, the Enforcer gloves also offer decent impact protection thanks to their hard armour. They remained completely waterproof during our test and were thermally above average, so hands should stay warm for longer too. Their main weak point is seam strength. The cuffs can be awkward to get under some winter jackets and the wrist strap could do with a longer Velcro overlap, but the gloves have a fair feel factor. A visor-wipe strip is on the thumb of the left-hand glove.

RiDE VERDICT

Road testing	■■■■■■■■■■	7
Warmth	■■■■■■■■■■	7
Waterproofing	■■■■■■■■■■	10
Abrasion	■■■■■■■■■■	10
Seam strength	■■■■■■■■■■	3
Wrist restraint	■■■■■■■■■■	7
Impact protection	■■■■■■■■■■	9
Total		53/70

 OVERALL
 52/70
 RATING


Triumph Sympatex Expedition £59.99

Contact: 01455 251700 or www.triumph.com

2 TESTER'S NOTES: The road tester didn't want to give this pair back as they're supple, comfortable and have good feel. The only niggle was the little finger lining occasionally pulling out. A good thermal score, but the Expeditions leaked a tiny drop onto the thumb knuckle on one hand during waterproof testing. Great impact protection, but seam strength could be improved. Effective wrist restraint means these gloves should stay on in a slide. They feature a visor wipe on the left thumb.

RiDE VERDICT

Road testing	■■■■■■■■■■	10
Warmth	■■■■■■■■■■	9
Waterproofing	■■■■■■■■■■	7
Abrasion	■■■■■■■■■■	6
Seam strength	■■■■■■■■■■	2
Wrist restraint	■■■■■■■■■■	8
Impact protection	■■■■■■■■■■	10
Total		52/70

OVERALL
51/70
RATING

Tuzo TZG-5 £29.99

Contact: 08712 009030 or www.tuzo-motorcycleclothing.com

3 **TESTER'S NOTES:** Full marks in both the thermal and waterproof tests means these gloves should keep hands warm. The lab results were borne-out by road testing. The gloves received top marks in the impact test thanks to the hard knuckle armour and they also gained a good abrasion result. The wrist restraint could be better - there's not enough Velcro overlap for thin wristed riders. Unfortunately they are also fairly bulky gloves without much feel for levers and switches.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	6
Warmth	10
Waterproofing	10
Abrasion	8
Seam strength	3
Wrist restraint	4
Impact protection	10
Total	51/70

OVERALL
48/70
RATING

Tech 7 Sonic £29.99

Contact: Contact 0844 248 8185 or www.busters-accessories.co.uk

4 **TESTER'S NOTES:** The Sonics are a tad bulky and stiff but they received a good road-testing score, doing all that was required of them. Decent impact protection test results and an excellent performance in the warmth test are let down only by a long wrist restraint strap (which could do with more Velcro overlap) and their waterproofing. They leaked a tiny amount in wet-weather road testing and also leaked a couple of drops onto one knuckle and fingertip during waterproof testing.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	8
Warmth	10
Waterproofing	6
Abrasion	7
Seam strength	6
Wrist restraint	2
Impact protection	9
Total	48/70

OVERALL
43/70
RATING

Frank Thomas Force Aqua £59.99

Contact: 01933 410272 or www.frank-thomas.co.uk

5 **TESTER'S NOTES:** The Force Aqua was completely waterproof during testing and showed a good thermal result. Semi-hard knuckle armour gives decent protection from impacts and there's average abrasion resistance, but seam strength is lacking and there's no wrist strap to keep them on. They impressed the road tester though, as they're comfortable and supple, with good feel. The great cuff system allows sleeves to be clamped snug and tight meaning absolutely no drafts.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	9
Warmth	8
Waterproofing	10
Abrasion	5
Seam strength	2
Wrist restraint	1
Impact protection	8
Total	43/70

OVERALL
39/70
RATING

Joe Rocket Nitrogen £59.99

Contact: 01425 620580 or www.tranam.co.uk

6 **TESTER'S NOTES:** The Nitrogens posted a good thermal score and were also completely waterproof. However, their impact and abrasion resistance could be better with some hard armour and the seam strength was lacking. The wrist restraint has just enough overlap for thin wrists and the 'gel palm' removes some feel and fingertips are fairly bulky, but the soft lining makes these supple gloves particularly comfortable. There are also useful visor wipers on both thumbs.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	7
Warmth	9
Waterproofing	10
Abrasion	2
Seam strength	3
Wrist restraint	7
Impact protection	1
Total	39/70

OVERALL
34/70
RATING

Komeni £14.95

Contact: 08704 282272 or www.bikestyle.co.uk

7 **TESTER'S NOTES:** These are supple and soft gloves, but the bulky palms mean feel isn't great. They did everything our road tester needed them to - nothing to criticise, but nothing to praise, either. On the plus side, they were completely waterproof during testing, thermally they were above average and impact protection was above average. On the negative side, seam strength was poor, abrasion resistance wasn't great and there's no wrist restraint strap to secure them.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	6
Warmth	8
Waterproofing	10
Abrasion	2
Seam strength	1
Wrist restraint	1
Impact protection	6
Total	34/70

OVERALL
30/70
RATING

Lewis Glacier £34.99

Contact: 01933 411525 or www.lewisgear.com

8 **TESTER'S NOTES:** These gloves are a good fit and have an admirable feel factor. The wrist restraint has two ends and Velcro in the middle, under the wrist, but the straps cannot be pulled tight enough and the two ends point out from the wrist at 90 degrees, which is uncomfortable. They were below average for warmth and leaked all over the thumb, index finger and little-finger ends. With poor impact resistance, below average abrasion and average seam strength, these gloves aren't winners.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	8
Warmth	4
Waterproofing	4
Abrasion	4
Seam strength	5
Wrist restraint	3
Impact protection	2
Total	30/70

OVERALL
26/70
RATING

Oxford Bone Dry £17.99

Contact: 01993 862300 or www.oxprod.com

9 **TESTER'S NOTES:** The Bone Dries are supple gloves but the tester found the index and little finger linings were uncomfortable at the fingertips and they were bulky. There are no wrist restraint straps to hold them on in a crash. The abrasion resistance and seam strength are among the worst in this test, their impact resistance score was below average and they weren't too warm either. However, they did at least live up to their name and remained completely waterproof during testing.

RIDE VERDICT	
Road testing	6
Warmth	4
Waterproofing	10
Abrasion	1
Seam strength	1
Wrist restraint	1
Impact protection	3
Total	26/70

? VERDICT

This is a tough test - especially for budget gloves. You know, when looking at any product built to a price, that somewhere along the line a decision has been made, spec has been drafted accordingly and you're not likely to get a comprehensive performance. And that's the case with the gloves here. Most of them perform well in one or more areas, but none performs brilliantly in every area. Which may be expected because these are, let's face it, budget gloves - but they're still not cheap and we're not letting them off. We're not awarding a Best Buy triangle this month as all the gloves in this test fall down in at least one key area.

There are still, though, some very good gloves in this group. Top performers are the Spada Enforcer gloves and they receive a RIDE Recommended award despite having questionable seam strength. The Triumph Sympatex Expedition gloves would also have gained Recommended status for their outstanding road-test performance, had they not leaked slightly during the waterproof test. It seems you can get most of what we look for in a pair of gloves below £60. The question is, will a bigger budget get more? Find out next month.

NEXT MONTH: WINTER GLOVES PT.2

