

Grouptest: Messenger Bags

Going somewhere on your bike? Need to carry stuff? Need an all-round bag for just carrying all your junk? Chipps had rounded up a very large cupboardful of messenger bags and rated them on the street.

Back in the day, most London bike messengers used to use variations on the old rubberised cloth 'Guardian' newspaper delivery bag. These were waterproof and tall, while also not being deep enough to carry much volume and a pain to get stuff out of.

Then Timbuk2 and Zo bags started to appear. They were made from hardwearing Cordura and pretty waterproof, were easy to adjust and comfortable to wear all day. Since then, many other firms have sprung up, offering ways for you to carry stuff on your bike.

You don't need to be a bike messenger to appreciate the finer points of these bags and anyone who commutes, or carries stuff on their bike needs a decent bag.

All of these bags were tested on daily commutes and weekly shopping trips – we reckon the most popular (and useful) size of bag is one that will also hold a shopping basket's worth of groceries so we tried filling them all with a weekly shop too.



Baileyworks SuperPro (Large) 29.5L

Price: US\$159 (£83 approx + shipping)
From: www.baileyworks.com
Left or right swing.

Baileyworks is a small messenger bag company from New Hampshire and its bags have the look of something designed for the purpose of hauling stuff on a bike. The Cordura outer and truck tarp inner takes a while to wear in, but is soon supple and comfortable. The bag has a tough double base and a reflective strip on the lid with blinky light tab too.

The front face of the bag holds two Velcro-down long pockets big enough for locks or A-Zs. There's another open pocket too. Inside are a further three big pockets and a zipped pocket too. The shoulder strap is very supple, with comfy padding and can be reversed. The split strap also features a double-D ring style adjuster for one handed strap shortening/loosening. It can be reversed too for left swing use and the centrally mounted cross strap covers both options.

Overall: It's a simple, tough, well made bag. An ideal size for all round use – even shopping – and a good US made alternative to the me-too bags out there.



Bagaboo Large 31L

Price: 70FT (£47 approx + shipping)
From: www.bagaboo.hu
Left or right swing.

In a welcome change to the 'Made in Canada' norm, the Bagaboo comes from Hungary. It's a fully featured 'pro' bag with some features of the £100+ set. Rigid truck tarpaulin covered in Cordura, seatbelt webbing, metal buckles and a splittable shoulder strap are all top notch. Metal carabiners allow the strap to be swapped for left swing too. A double-D strap allows for on the fly adjustment of the shoulder strap and the shoulder strap is broad, removable and has straps and Velcro for accessories. Two base straps can cinch up to reduce the bag volume and the usual Velcro and buckles keep it all shut up.

Inside there's a lot of room, with a zipped back-pad pocket and three large front pockets. On the face of the outside of the bag are another couple of zipped pockets and another one for pens etc. **Overall:** Like all Cordura/tarp bags, it takes ages to wear in, but is worth the wait. The pockets and strap features make it useful for pros or commuters alike. Their website is very helpful and they'll do whatever colours and patterns you fancy too...



Bontrager 30L

Price: £49.99
From: Trek UK 01908 282 626
www.bontrager.com
Left or right swing

A smart looking laptop bag from Bontrager (Looks small for the claimed 30 litres though). Standard laptop bag features like; padded internal pocket, many pockets for pens, phone etc. Removable internal mesh pocket for, er, removable stuff. Front, zipped mesh pocket and two side pockets that'll hold water bottles or flipflops. Reflective LED tag and reflective tails. Water resistant zip on lid allows 'cheater' access to bag while 'strap through lid' arrangement keeps the sides watertight. Further zipped pocket on lid and grab handle. Shoulder strap has Velcro on pad and two buckles to adjust strap length.

As small bags go, it's neat and easy to carry. It hold a fair amount, though the strap through lid arrangement limits how wide the bag will open for access. Also the shoulder strap is limited in adjustment and at minimum length was too long for all but the tallest riders.

Overall: Neat and smart, but not perfect for riding with. Kudos for the bottle carrying feature though.

