



Chrome Metropolis Bag

Price: £109.99

32L

From: MMA 01267 234369
www.chromebags.com
Right swing

Chrome are almost as well known as Timbuk2 for their messenger bags these days and have enough features to keep a pro messenger happy.

The outer is durable Cordura and the interior is waterproof truck tarp. The lid is sewn so that the top folds over on itself, keeping water out from vulnerable corners. The bag is right swing with a sewn-in shoulder strap covered in a Velcro panel for adding radios and stuff. The strap is car seatbelt fabric with a metal 70s car buckle release. A double-D buckle allows one handed adjustment too. Pockets for U-locks, pens and the like. The cross-strap and lid straps all have reflective fabric woven in.

The Metropolis has a reassuring air of sturdiness to it and the stiff feeling tarp doesn't feel like it's going to wear out any time soon. The cross strap feels stuck in your armpit and isn't adjustable, but the rest of the straps, especially the one hand adjust buckle works wonderfully.

Overall: One for the serious commuters and pro messengers.



Cocotte Alfredo

34L

Price: CAD\$149 – approx £70 + shipping.

From: www.cocotte-equip.com
Left or right swing

Cocotte bags are from Montreal (what is it with messenger bag companies and Canada?) and is of the 'burly Cordura lined with truck tarp' variety. It has good solid Velcro and straps holding it shut and is amazingly deep (front to back) for its size – it's 30cm deep and easily holds a box with five reams of paper in it, should you wish to. Cleverly, the lid straps are connected through D-rings to the back panel of the bag.

The interior is simple – a truck tarp inner pocket big enough for a lock and a couple of token pen/phone pockets. There's also a big flat Velcro pocket up front (good for your A-Z) and another pocket at the rear that holds the foam padding for the bag (which you can remove and sit on when you eat your lunch in the snow... or not)

The (split) shoulder strap attaches by chunky buckles and is reversible for left or right swing. The car seatbelt strap has a double-D buckle for one handed use and is backed by the widest strap pad on test.

Overall, a great bag with good capacity, though it can be a little unwieldy when completely stuffed. Rock solid and a good price for the quality.



Crumpler Cheesy Disco

18L

Price: £85

From: Simms 0845 3459354
www.simms.co.uk
Right swing

Crumpler has quickly worked their way up to being known as the 'Australian Timbuk2'. The Cheesy Disco is a messenger style laptop bag. As such it's much slimmer than a 'pure' messenger bag and will take a laptop in a separate, padded sleeve and a change of clothes. It also has a huge number of internal zipped, Velcroed and open pockets. The vibrant 'Chickentex' material is Cordura-esque and tough, with a smart contrasting stripe and a reflective stripe across the base. The lid is constructed so that the corners are watertight.

The padded strap is narrow but the QR buckle makes adjustment a breeze. That can't be said for the cross strap though as the buckle sits at the bag end of the cross strap and is very hard to engage or release when the bag's full. With the bag even slightly loaded too, it's hard to get anything out of the inside pockets and the bag's slim design stops you opening it out for a good rummage.

Overall: if you're super-neat and need to ride with your laptop, then ignore the silly name and try the Cheesy Disco.





Crumpler Fux Deluxe

Price: £59

25L

From: Simms 0845 3459354

www.simms.co.uk

Right swing

The Fux Deluxe from Crumpler is far more 'messenger' than 'office' and more suited to general lugging around of stuff on a bike. The fabric and overall feel of the bag is far more supple than the Cheesy Disco and far more welcoming.

The shape of the bag is more sausage (Toblerone actually) than square and the bag wraps around your back well. The subsequently short lid is easy to flip up for fishing into, though the relative shallowness of the top of the bag makes pulling larger stuff out hard. Internal pockets are mercifully simple – three big ones, with the centre one Velcroed, and one big zip-across one on the front face.

The Fux Deluxe also shares some of the niggles of the Cheesy Disco, like the hard to use cross strap and though the shoulder strap is easy to adjust, where is the trailing end of loose strap supposed to go?

Overall: Niggles aside, this is a comfortable bag to wear and its mid-size makes it great for other non-bike occasions too. If you don't carry your whole house on your back, it's a great bag.



What's in your bag?

Our man on the inside, Buffalo Bill asked a couple of London messengers to empty out their bags and record the contents.

Tofu's black Under The Weather standard

Outside pocket: Three inner tubes, Road Morph mini-pump, two black pens; gel and regular, black Sharpie marker pen, small purple pen.

Inside left pocket: Pack of JPS cigarettes (20), 30 SPF chapstick, some mints I nicked from a client, London Geographia Mini A-Z (covered in tape and with many stuck together pages),

Inside right pocket: Titanium spork, one AAA battery, one rear light (cheap) one front light (turtle), traveler's tub of Vaseline, waiter's model Swiss Army knife,

Inside zip pocket: Wallet made from a Fed-Ex envelope, passport (Canadian),

Right cargo pocket: Castelli Gore-Tex XCR jacket

Left cargo pocket: Tool pouch containing: two sets hex wrench multi-tool, f&ck off big 8mm hex wrench, two Park tool tire levers, Shimano chainring bolt tool, Park chain tool, Park tool triple spoke wrench, Mavic bearing tool, 15mm spanner (Japanese), patch kit in a change purse

Main body: Empty bottle of water 500ml, one GFI nalgene water bottle 1L, one off-white Eddy Merckx cap, one Zefal clip-on rear mud-guard, empty Innocent smoothie bottle, Briko sun-glasses case, scrap of paper with an address on it

Rear pocket: One copy of Vice magazine, one manifest holder, stickered and containing various crap.

Jakob's grey Pac OS deluxe

On the strap: Three pouches containing radio, PDA, mob phone and the following badges: Kraftwerk Tour de France, 'if it aint stiff it ain't worth a fuck', a black and white Cinelli badge, Machine TMGE

Outside pocket: Two boxes filter tips, a map of the Estonian Islands, Geographia Mini A-Z missing the letter W onwards from its index, some Hungarian language stickers, Zippo flints, an umbrella case containing two extra toe-straps, one an MKS & the other black commuter jobby, a Jaegermeister rear light obtained from the Jaegerettes, pen from a client, passport (Swedish), someone else's bank card, Hackney library card, Pitlock security code card, gear chart from Deeside cycles, £80 cash, CC id, Oyster card (no credit),

Inside pocket: Specialized inner tube (700c x 20-28 - long valve), Park multi tool, half a roll of duct tape, torn Cuban cap, someone else's mobile phone, Toothbrush, 'Kreuzberg' cycling cap, bright pink scale for weighing parcels, black diamond carabiner holding a Campy down-tube lever, an EAI locking, a Cinecyle bottle and a Track cycling badge from Russia, some literature from a tide mill in E3, Manifest holder stickered with the legend 'Sweden ate my balls', and containing Crossword puzzles, some sim cards, a phone number, some fliers, and some unused stickers

Tool pouch containing: Park multi-tool, crank tool, chain tool, baggage mesh, cable ties (assorted), Park tire levers, some sort of tool that I have no idea what it's good for, Campy bottom bracket extractor, a small adjustable spanner and some loose hex wrenches.

Main body: Creative Couriers cycling jersey

Left or right swing? Cross strapping or not?

Most people run their bags with a 'right swing' which means that the strap goes over your left shoulder and swings under your right armpit when you want to get to it. It's determined by where the strap adjuster is and where the padding is. Some folks are left swing though, and some probably don't care. If you get the wrong swing, though, it's just not going to feel right. Some bags here are either one swing or another, others are swappable and some of the custom bags can be ordered to your swinging preference.

A cross strap comes from a bottom corner of your bag, under the armpit of your favoured shoulder and secures to the main strap with a QR buckle. This stabilises the bag and helps keep it from creeping off your back and onto your knees.