



Wildcat Gear *Tiger seatpack and Mountain Lion handlebar harness*

Price: Tiger £60.00, Mountain Lion £48.00

From: Wildcat Gear, wildcatgear.co.uk

Tested: Six months.

Bikes are good at covering large distances with relative ease. They let us cover dozens of miles in a day, returning in time to put our feet up on the sofa with a well earned tea/beer/G&T and settle down to Strictly Come Sew Off, Get Me Out of Here.

But, what if we want to explore further and longer? Maybe sleep elsewhere for a night, whether that be bivvy, tent, bothy or B&B? Fun, but the difficulty with staying out for longer is the need for more gear. More food, more layers, somewhere to sleep, something to cook an overnight meal, hip flask, espresso machine...

Whether you choose to go über-light or suffer a heavier load to afford luxury later, you'll need a way of carrying this kit. A large rucksack does the job, but a heavy weight on your shoulders all day gets tiring and uncomfortable. It also doesn't do your balance many favours. Panniers are heavy, rattly and have clearance issues.

Wildcat Gear designs and manufactures luggage in the UK. The Mountain Lion and Tiger are designed as a retention system for a bar and saddle bag. You will need to supply a suitable dry bag for each end. I used a 13L bag at the front, and an 8L at the rear. Beyond the obvious benefits of dry kit, this allows you to remove the drybags once you reach your location, leaving the retention systems attached and ready to be loaded the next day.

Initial fitting was a bit of a fiddly affair. The instructions make

sense, but only after a few trial and error attempts - particularly so for the Mountain Lion on the front. I'd recommend you don't wait until the morning of your first ride to fit this, as it can take a bit of adjusting to find the best set up. I'd also strongly recommend covering any possible contact spots on your frame, because it will rub. Once fitted it provides a cradle for your dry bag, which is held in place via two webbing straps with buckles and in my case carried lightweight sleeping bag, bivvy bag, inflatable mattress and down jacket.

The Tiger on the rear is simpler to fit. There are a few more straps and buckles to hold the dry bag (carrying spare clothing, food and a gas canister) in place, and they help compress the bag down into the harness. My only criticism of the design is that it requires careful packing to fill the taper of the bag as it nears the seatpost, otherwise the whole system can be a bit unstable.

Assuming sensible packing, both ends are stable in use. The bar bag doesn't noticeably move and there is minimal wag from the rear. I needed to tighten the straps after an hour or so but after that, it was as close to fit and forget as you'll get. Having a couple of kilos of weight strapped to your bars takes a bit of getting used to, but doesn't adversely affect handling. I didn't find the saddle bag got in my way when getting off the back of the saddle either, and was comfortable riding technical terrain.

Construction is excellent, with no signs of wear yet. Wildcat tests its designs to destruction and that shows in the finished products, which represent good value if you do a few trips a year. Overall: Minor niggles aside, Wildcat have set the standard for well thought-out bikepacking kit.

Tom Hill.

