

7 OF THE BEST

Winter tyres

Summer rubber just won't cut it on the cold, wet and debris-strewn roads of winter. Time to fit something that will protect you from punctures and grip in the rain, says *Louise Mahé*

Tyres are a vital part of your bike and the thing that connects you with the road. In winter there is more surface water, potholes and debris to contend with, and as winter creeps in it is advisable to change your tyres for a more robust, grippier option.

The preferred tyre width, especially during

winter months, is now 25mm over the more regular 23mm option. Although they may weigh a little more, the larger volume gives a more comfortable ride and bigger contact patch.

We've chosen seven different tyres ideal for tackling winter weather and road conditions. Each offers increased durability, grip and

puncture protection over their summer counterparts, making riding in winter easier, more enjoyable and hassle-free.

Most tyres here come in a range of widths to suit your personal preference, and use various compounds. There's even a potentially game-changing solid tyre. Imagine, no punctures, ever!

WHAT TO LOOK FOR



Protection

A thicker tyre will resist sharp objects and be harder to penetrate. With a budget winter tyre, you may get a hardwearing tread and heavy carcass, but grip, feel and performance will be average at best. However, a quality winter tyre will have a higher TPI (threads per inch) count, giving it similar handling and feel to a summer tyre, but with the addition of a puncture protection band. Grippier rubber offers more feedback on wet and cold roads and when a flint does penetrate, the puncture band may stop it reaching the inner tube. Keeping your tyres pumped at the correct pressures also helps prevent punctures.

Performance

The trend towards fatter tyres, from 25c to 30c, is good news for winter riders. A fatter tyre actually has a lower rolling resistance than a narrow one. The contact patch is shorter and the tyre deforms less. You can afford to run a fatter tyre at lower pressures which can

improve comfort, grip and feel. In winter, when rubber compounds take longer to warm up, you need all the help you can get.

It's not the tread on a tyre that grips the road; it's the rubber compound. A slick bicycle tyre will not aquaplane in the wet, so you could ride slicks through the winter. Winter tyres tend to have a tread pattern, however, as it helps you to check the wear rate — a heavy tread will provide some traction on mud.

Longevity

You want your tyres to last the winter. A quality winter tyre using similar materials to a summer tyre may not last that long. Winter riding is harder on tyres, mainly because there are more flints, thorns and debris washed onto the road to damage them. It's important to regularly check your tyres for damage and remove embedded objects with a tweezer or penknife. If you have mudguards, the back tyre can wear down to the canvas if you don't make an effort to inspect it properly.



Protective belt staves off flats



Go for 25c or fatter in winter



Some tread can help on dirty roads

Vittoria Rubino Pro Tech £29.99

The newest tyre in Vittoria's winter range, the Rubino was relatively easy to fit and carries you through winter rides with confidence. It's attractively priced, but the quality and performance didn't suffer for it. On wet, debris strewn and potholed roads, the Rubinos

gripped and cornered well while keeping out anything that might cause a puncture. The pay-off for the high level of puncture protection was a slightly slower rolling tyre, but a worthwhile compromise when the worst of winter sets in.



www.chickencycles.co.uk



Confident handling, puncture resistant and good value

Vredestein Fortezza Senso Xtreme Weather £45

Despite a nasty fragment of glass causing a puncture on the first outing, these tyres impressed us. Mounting was easy and subsequent rides on wet, dirty roads went without incident, suggesting our initial puncture was just bad luck.

With excellent grip, there was minimal slip on steep, wet climbs. We avoided the maximum inflation pressure of 175psi as even 130-140psi gave a harsh ride — lowering the pressure to 100-110 felt much better.



www.saddleback.co.uk



Excellent tyres for sportier winter riding

Tannus Musai £99 a pair

Using a newly designed compound called Aither, Tannus tyres could be the answer for those looking to never puncture again. This completely solid tyre gave a sluggish and harsh ride, but boasts the ability to do an astonishing 9,000 miles before needing replacement. After initial reservations, we

soon felt confident in the grip and think they may be the perfect solution for those commuting or just out for shorter rides. Coming in a whole host of sizes and colours, there's something for all riders and bikes. A lot to shell out but potentially very cost effective over time.



www.tannus.co.uk



Puncture free but a slow, harsh ride

Rubena Syrinx Racing Pro £24.95

After switching from a svelte set of tan-sidewalled tyres for the Rubena Syrinx, what struck us first is how plain Jane they look. The shiny rubber finish didn't fill us with confidence, however, after several 100 miles we'd be happy to keep these tyres on as they work a

dream at this time of year. Grip was outstanding in both dry and wet conditions at normal speed at least. When pushed, we never lost grip, but didn't really know how close to the limit we were. For a heavy winter tyre, they rolled well too.



www.rubenacycle.co.uk



On style alone they lose out, but a tyre that grips and rolls well



Schwalbe Durano £34.99

Known to be a proper mile-muncher, the Durano didn't disappoint and saw us through a fair few winter rides and commutes. The dual compound offered great grip on wet winter roads, leaving us confident when cornering. Despite this extra grip the dual compound

enabled them to still roll well.

We experienced no punctures when riding, due to the RaceGuard protection belt that lines the tyre — or possibly a bit of luck! Coming in middle of the pile price-wise, the Duranos are a solid choice of winter tyre.



www.schwalbe.com/gb/

CYCLING
ACTIVE
GROUP TEST
WINNER



A decent winter tyre for those looking to get the miles in

Michelin Pro4 Grip £41.99

Initially rather tricky to get on, the Pro4 Grips have a high-grip compound, increased contact area profile and sidewall tread pattern which all claim to give 15 per cent more grip over regular Pro4s. They didn't disappoint and we felt confident in the grip, as even when pushed on wet, mucky

roads they didn't slip.

With an Aramid reinforcing ply puncture belt that extends to the sidewalls, we suffered no flats. Surprisingly this and the changes made to increase grip didn't seem to increase the rolling resistance too much. They are only available in a 23mm width.



www.michelin.co.uk



A grippier, puncture proof version of the Pro4

Continental Grand Prix 4Season £54.95

All-rounder tyres can often be a little lackluster when it comes to winter riding, but the 4Seasons from Continental are a jack-of-all-trades and seem to have it nailed. At 230g, Conti has produced a fairly lightweight tyre that can still handle harsher roads, offering

both grip and rolling ability in mixed conditions. The Black 'Max Grip Silica' is optimised for performance on the cold, wet roads of winter. For those not wanting to change tyres these are ideal as you run all year round without issues.



www.conti-tyres.co.uk



Ideal tyre for regular rides in mixed conditions

VERDICT

Overall the Schwalbe Durano's were the winners; a mile-munching tyre that'll easily see you through the winter months, with a reasonable price tag to boot. We had no real qualms with these tyres and were confident in their grip and puncture proofing. The Continental GP 4Seasons also shone in our test, especially as they ride well in all conditions and seasons, but the price may deter some.

However, if puncture proofing and durability is what you're looking for, Tannus's revolutionary solid tyre is worth a look. These innovative tyres could be perfect for short commutes and weekend park rides — they are a sluggish feeling tyre that can be a bit harsh over potholes, and they take a bit of time to put on properly. Far from perfect, could this be the start of a whole new era in puncture-proof tyres?

