

Rainlegs: Singing in the Rain....Legs

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One factor that discourages many people from more frequent cycling is getting wet when it rains. Waterproof clothing is available from basic 'rain capes' through to technologically up-to-date breathable fabrics. These tend to cater very well for the upper body but, to date, I have yet to find waterproof trousers that are comfortable and don't make me as wet from perspiration as I would be from the rain.

At the 2005 London Cycle Show, I discovered a company called "Rainlegs". The product they were marketing was similar in concept to the leather chaps worn by cattle ranchers on horseback. They comprise waterproof material that covers the front and side of the thighs and knees, secured at the waist with a belt, under the crotch with quick release buckles, and below the knee with Velcro straps. The whole garment can be rolled up and fastened with press studs and worn like a belt for quick deployment if caught in a downpour, or to get out of the way when it has stopped raining. They even come with reflective patches.

I spoke to their representative Kees Nilelen about Public Safety Cycling applications and he gave me a set to trial.

Winter 2005/2006 in the UK was very dry, so I did not get much opportunity to put them through their paces. This past winter was a different story, however, and I have worn my Rainlegs a number of times. Most tests have been done during my commute to and from work, which I undertake on a drop-handlebar road bike. I have also worn them several times whilst patrolling on my mountain bike.

I love them! Unlike waterproof trousers, the backs of your legs are not encased in the garment, a factor which allows them to breathe, reducing perspiration. On one of my routes to work, an area of the road floods regularly, kerb to kerb, during moderate to heavy rainfall. On two or three occasions when negotiating this flood, vehicles travelling in the opposite direction have created a 'bow wave' that has soaked me from head to toe. Water has seeped in through the neck of my jacket and through the 'pit zips' under my arms, allowing my upper body to get wet. My legs, however, have remained dry where covered by the Rainlegs. The other benefit of keeping the front of the thighs dry when cycling in winter is that they keep warmer, reducing the risk of muscle strain injury.

Due to their design, Rainlegs do not keep the whole leg dry. The front of the shin is exposed but, as the trousers or leggings I wear when cycling tend to be of the fast drying variety, this does not create a problem. The front of the thigh also becomes slightly damp with perspiration during strenuous cycling, but I have found that perspiration dries a lot quicker than rain so again, this has not presented a problem.

My set of Rainlegs is light grey in colour but black Rainlegs are available as a custom order from the company. Owner Ronald Warmerdam has indicated that a minimum order of 2500 is required to get black items made up, perhaps a consideration for a supplier or large department to explore.

Retailing at around £25 in the UK, they are a clever design that I would recommend you try if you are regularly cycling in the rain.

Their product can be viewed at www.rainlegs.co.uk.

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