

Here's the thing about backpacks: the bigger they are, the more stuff you're going to find to carry around in them. Since mine always seem full—and heavy—the Sanction is just the thing for portaging my potent portables. Not too big, not too small. Just right. Mmm...porridge.

First up: yes, there's a laptop sleeve, but it's not like any other I've seen. Open the flap, then unzip a zipper underneath and you gain access to a compartment against your back that can swallow a pretty hefty-sized laptop. It's padded at the back, but not against the rest of the bag, so you might want to slip your laptop into another case if you're hard on your gear.



PHOTOS: ADAM NEWMAN



Out front there are also two zippered pouches with high-zoot sealed zippers, plus a big Velcro pouch that fits a mini U-lock. There's also a long, thin, and vertical bonus section between the pouches and the main compartment. The main area is about 7"x12", so you can stuff a jacket and a pair of shoes, or maybe your lunch in there, but at 1,000cu.in. (16L) of total capacity, this is not the bag you'd want to grab for a three-day weekend. This is more a stow-under-the-airline-seat-in-front-of-you kind of bag than the stuff-in-the-overhead-bin-and-hope-the-door-closes type.

Constructed from hefty synthetic fabrics, it's billed as weatherproof, not waterproof. The fabric will resist rain showers, but the bag doesn't seal up like a roll-top bag might. The shoulder straps are wide and perfectly padded, though they're set fairly far apart. If my shoulders were any narrower—or maybe yours are—it might get a bit uncomfortable. There's a sternum strap to help keep them in line, but you might want to try this guy on before you buy.

The Sanction is available in four subtle colors: black, dark green, gray, and charcoal. Also available is an optional waist strap, though it didn't seem necessary as the bag is too small to do a lot of moving and shaking while riding. I would have liked to see some reflective accents though, and the blinky loop is on the very bottom, making it impractical in real-world use.

If it fits, the made-in-the-U.S.A. finish and craftsmanship are certainly worth the \$179 asking price. missionworkshop.com

BAR MITTS

BY KAREN BROOKS

For riding in really cold temperatures—I'm talking down into the teens and single digits—no glove, no matter how thick, can keep my hands warm enough. Dedicated cyclists in cold climates often turn to pogies, basically a pair of giant mittens that encompass the whole ends of the handlebar along with brake and shift levers; but they'll only work for straight bars. Enter Bar Mitts: pogies for drop bars.

Bar Mitts are made of neoprene and slide up from the bottom of the bar to encompass the shift/brake levers, with a small opening for the housing and a large one for your hands. Installation is quite easy, and it's equally simple to pull them off if the weather warms up.

On my first ride, I was leery of getting tangled trying to get my hands inside, but I quickly got used to the slight change in motion of hands in/hands out. The warmth they give is incredible—neoprene is waterproof, windproof, and works well as an insulator. The excess space around my wrists at the openings was a non-factor. I could wear relatively thin gloves—what I would normally wear above 50°F—on the coldest

days. They didn't interfere with braking and shifting; in fact, it was definitely easier to shift and brake with thin gloves inside the Bar Mitts than with the thick gloves I'd otherwise use. It was also easy to pull out a hand to signal a turn. I'd still recommend these to people with barend shifters. Two minor drawbacks: they'll give some resistance in crosswinds. They also don't cover your hands in the drops or on the top next to the stem, only on the brake hoods. But that's where I spend about 75-90% of my riding time, and I was more than willing to forego the other positions for toasty-warm hands.

Bar Mitts come in three sizes for different forearm thicknesses (I used medium to accommodate thick sleeves), and in configurations to fit Shimano, SRAM, and Campagnolo shifter/brake levers. The Shimano styles come in black, blue, and red; others are just black. A more traditional flat-bar version is also available. They all go for \$65, which may seem like a lot for neoprene sleeves, but they paid for themselves in unspent gas money in the winter. Made in China. barmitts.com



PHOTOS: KAREN BROOKS

