



WE SAY...

Great quality leather touring saddle that may take breaking-in

SPA CYCLES NIDD

£35 > Brooks saddle challenger at a bargain price

Yorkshire touring specialist Spa Cycles has branched out from bikes, and its kit range now includes a trio of leather saddles aimed at touring and long-distance cyclists. Though it makes no mention of it these are clearly aimed at the long-established leader in the leather saddle world – Brooks. The Nidd is named after a Yorkshire river – yep, we had to look it up – and is Spa's answer to Brooks's venerable B17. They have a similar shape, rivets in the same place, saddlebag loops and three holes on the top. The frame and rails are chrome plated chromoly.

There's no getting away from the fact that this is a firm saddle, and it is going to take a while to wear in, but if you look after it – proofing it occasionally – it should take forever to wear out. The Australian cowhide is thicker than the leather Brooks uses, which makes it firmer still and slightly heavier. Ours weighed 601g, compared with around 540g for the Brooks. The 170mm width and 280mm length are also very Brooks like. The construction doesn't have Brooks's artisan imperfections, and is uniform and first-rate. And given the quirky language of the instructions, it has all the hallmarks of coming from the Far East not the English Midlands.

And while it is firm, we'd actually got in a few rides and a fair few miles before remembering we

were actually testing it, which is a compliment for any saddle. You can adjust its tension using an Allen key (more convenient than Brooks's spanner) and the side tension using laces; we didn't need to. The chromoly rails also allow for an impressive amount of fore and aft adjustment.

If you want to strap a saddlebag to the Nidd's metal loops, Spa just happens to have the nifty little Derwent bag in its range. And – surprise! – it's half the price of Brooks's Challenge tool bag.

Spa has delivered a product that genuinely challenges Brooks's range. It may require a long breaking-in period and it's certainly better with padded shorts rather than unpadded non-cycling wear, but this is a high quality, bargain priced product that – with some care – could outlast you. As with any leather saddle, try not to let it get wet (and if you do so, let it dry naturally), proof it periodically and ride, ride and ride some more.

Carbon has its place in cycling, but when it comes to saddles, steel and good old-fashioned leather have their place too. Who says trad's dead? www.spacycles.co.uk

HIGHS Comfort; great quality for the price
LOWS Heavy; potentially long breaking-in

CYCLING



ALTERNATIVELY...

Sitting comfortably



BRITISH INSTITUTION

BROOKS B17 STANDARD

£74.99

Brooks's B17 saddle is available in numerous versions with different rail materials and colour options, with some versions having hand-hammered copper rivets. All are made in England as this legendary saddle has been for more than a century. A cycling institution.

www.brooksengland.com



ITALIAN JOB

SELLE SAN MARCO ROLLS

£54.99

Not as venerable as the Brooks, but the all-rounder Rolls is just as suited to racing as it is to touring. The leather covered nylon shell isn't going to make for a light perch by today's standards, but Hinault and LeMond rode them to Tour victories, and Andrea Tafi to a Roubaix win.

www.madison.co.uk



ABSOLUTE CORKER

GILLES BERTHOUD SOULOR CORK £124

At about 415g this unique saddle is a little lighter than either the Spa or the Brooks. The leather is treated with a dye that creates both the cork-like look and waterproofs it. The rails are stainless steel and the saddle can be tensioned using a 4mm Allen key. *C'est formidable!*

www.gillesberthoud.fr

