

BUYER'S GUIDE

TRI SADDLES

Riding on your tri-bars often requires a different type of saddle, and there are plenty out there that are purpose built for tri. Jack Sexty rates nine of the best...

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While you can spend vast amounts of cash upgrading your tri bike, a poor saddle choice negates the aero gains of wheels and bars if discomfort accompanies every pedal stroke. That's why you must find a saddle that works for you. Pain or numbness can, at best, leave you shuffling around on your saddle; at worst, you'll require recuperative time off the bike. So it's vital for both health and performance that you find one that'll allow you to hold a fixed position for long periods, especially if you're an iron racer.

Tri-specific saddles are different to road versions, as they're optimised to provide support for your sit bones while perched further forward on your aerobars. This means a wider flat section at the nose. Another common feature is cut-out sections down the middle to relieve perineum pressure.

We must stress that saddles are very personal. A good bike fit often includes saddle fitting and could flag up an unsuitable seat, while there are specialist bike shops that can offer sit-bone measurements to find a saddle with the correct width for your behind. If you're struggling to find your perfect saddle, either of these options could be wise investments. ▶

NOSE

The end of the saddle - many tri saddles have cut-off saddles or 'noseless' designs to stop excess movement in the TT position.

PADDING

The top section that you sit on must provide adequate comfort. Tri saddles often include a degree of grip to keep you in position.

RAILS

Attaching to your seatpost, saddle rails are invariably made of steel, titanium or carbon.



BONTRAGER HILO COMP

£59.99 This split-nose option from Trek's accessories brand is reminiscent of ISM's popular saddle design yet, on the Hilo Comp, there's a shell underneath the split-support zone all the way to the end of the nose. With steel rails and deep dual-layer foam it's the heaviest on test at 332g, though Bontrager say the base has extra flex for compliance. While in theory it should be ideal for triathlon, we found the split section a little narrow with a maximum width of 134mm. That's not to say

the Hilo Comp's not an affordable option for those who require extra pressure relief in the time-trial position, but it just didn't work for us. We were far more impressed with Bontrager's Aeolus saddle, which weighs a third less and picked up a Best Value gong in our 2019 saddles test. trekbikes.com

75%

VERDICT WEIGHTY SADDLE THAT IS GOOD VALUE AND PRESSURE-RELIEVING



FABRIC LINE-S ELITE FLAT



£59.99 The Line-S Elite Flat is aimed more at road riding compared to Fabric's Tri range, featuring a shallower central-relief channel with a wide rear section to fix you in position. This entry-level effort has cro-mo rails, weighs 238g and is 142mm at its widest point. Fabric say the aim of the split microfibres pad and full-length central channel is to decrease pressure on the pudendal artery that supplies blood to the muscles and organs of the pelvic cavity. But despite numerous

positional shifts we just didn't feel comfy, failing to find the sweetspot where our sit bones were perfectly positioned either side of the split pad. That's not to say it won't work for some, providing you're happy with the lower amount of padding compared to Fabric's 'Shallow' and 'Radius' profiles. fabric.cc

74%

VERDICT GOOD IN THEORY BUT WE JUST COULDN'T FIND A COMFORTABLE GROOVE

ISM PS 2.0

220
TRIATHLON
CUTTING
EDGE

£170.00 The PS 2.0 (no relation to the computer console) is one of the newest saddles in ISM's range. ISM's noseless design is based on the company's independent research, which tests their saddles against competitors to ensure maximum blood flow to reduce numbness down below. The PS 2.0 - suitable for road or tri according to ISM - features an upward slope at the back, designed to provide extra hip support when rotated in the aero position or an aggressive road stance. It means that

those who tend to move around a lot in the saddle might struggle to fix themselves perfectly on it. Not us. We found it hugely comfortable and it's one of the few saddles we've tested that kept us completely fixed in the TT position for two hours or more without wanting to shuffle. upgradebikes.co.uk

90%

VERDICT ONE OF ISM'S BEST TRI-SPECIFIC SADDLES YET. ALSO SUITABLE FOR ROAD BIKES



FIZIK VENTO ARGO R5

£99.99 Fizik were late to the party when it came to short-nosed saddles with central channels. Now, though, they offer many options with open sections and shorter noses. The Vento Argo R5 weighs in at 232g with alloy rails and is priced at the lower end of their performance-orientated range. It's aimed more at road riding compared to their tri-specific Mistica, but the width of the nose may still serve some riders well on a tri bike. It comes in 140mm or 150mm sizes – useful for

fine-tuning fit and finding a perfect groove. After some trial and error, we found ourselves planted very comfortably on the Vento Argo R5, with Fizik's Type 1 foam providing just enough padding. It's on the firmer end, so might not work for those who prefer some extra cushion. extrauk.co.uk

87% **VERDICT** ANOTHER SADDLE THAT COULD WORK FOR ROAD RIDING OR TRIATHLON



PROLOGO DIMENSION TRI TIROX 143



£119.99 The Dimension Tri features Prologo's 'Tirox' rails, which has an alloy-steel construction to bring the price down considerably lower than the carbon-railed version. The weight is still impressively low at 219g, and Prologo say the 143mm width should allow for better distribution of the rider's body weight. The nose is noticeably narrower than the other tri-specific saddles in this test, but for us it worked a treat, and was also very comfortable on a road bike because

of the wider seating area. Like Prologo's Tgale, their PAS channel runs down the centre to maximise blood flow and prevent excess pressure, and we found the foam was an ideal thickness without being too squishy. For us, this is the pick of the two Prologo saddles on test. chickencyclekit.co.uk

88% **VERDICT** EXCELLENT ALL-ROUNDER THAT PROVIDES HIGH COMFORT AT A LOW WEIGHT

REPENTE MAGNET

£249.99 The Magnet's super light at 139g. This much weight-shedding means you're not going to get the comfort of squishy saddles with thicker padding, but we found the water-based microfibre cover with 'super lightweight' EVA absolutely fine. Repente say their autoclave processing technique – which makes the carbon-fibre base structure more compact – allowed them to trim more weight, while the wide shape's also designed to adapt to female body shapes. The unusually-shaped

carbon rails are flatter at the rear, designed to provide more rigidity in the part that takes the most stress. Indeed, on our test rides, the Magnet appeared to eat up vibrations on rough roads. The rails are thick and oval-shaped, so you'll need a seat clamp that will fit oversized rails. upgradebikes.co.uk

81% **VERDICT** IMPRESSIVELY LIGHT SADDLE THAT'LL APPEAL TO ELITES AND TOP AGE-GROUP ATHLETES



FABRIC TRI RACE FLAT



£79.99 This saddle's become a firm favourite round here in recent times and the extra accessories – including a rear bottle mount and a hook for bike racking – make it excellent value. It tips the scales at 235g, and the central channel is recessed enough that it does the same job as saddles with an open channel. Fabric say this is so they can bond a waterproof microfibre cover straight onto the base, which they claim is softer than stretched-cover saddles. For us, it offered just the right

amount of firmness and pressure relief, and the wide split section nose is ideal for keeping you comfortable in an aggressive position. This titanium-railed version also hits the value sweet spot, as we can detect no discernible difference compared to the £139.99 Tri Flat Pro with carbon rails. fabric.cc



VERDICT INCREDIBLY GOOD-VALUE SADDLE THAT'S BORN TO RACE TRIATHLON



PRO AEROFUEL



£129.99 This hollow stainless-steel-railed model is impressive, weighing just 193g and feeling very similar to the top-end carbon model that's £50 more expensive. At its widest point, the Aerofuel is 142mm across, and has a non-slip cover that held us firmly in position without any annoying excess movement. The EVA padding becomes thicker towards the nose to offer more support when riding in an aggressive position but, for when you need to sit back, it's also comfy

towards the rear. The central cut-out is 2cm wide and provides ample pressure relief; we've put in many monstrous rides on the Aerofuel with no numbness or discomfort. It's a saddle that grows on us every time we test it and we've no doubt that many will find it ideal for tri. madison.co.uk

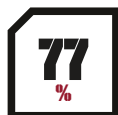


VERDICT LIGHT AND VERY COMFORTABLE; OUTPERFORMS MANY MORE EXPENSIVE MODELS

PROLOGO TGALE PAS

£254.99 Prologo's tri-specific Tgale comes with their Perennial Area System (PAS), which aims to prevent numbness in the pelvic region. In all honesty, it's an innovation we've never fully got on with, finding the nose section a little firmer than the likes of Pro's Aerofuel and the Fabric Tri. On the positive, the grip sections on the microfibre cover are a nice addition to prevent slippage. This top-of-the-range version has Prologo's Nack Carbon oversized rails, and at 243g it's not the lightest

out there. It's also rather expensive, so if the shape and design is for you then the Tirox-railed version at over £100 less is worth considering if you're on a budget. For adding rear bottle cages and/or a toolkit, the Tgale is compatible with Prologo's U-Cage mounting system. chickencyclekit.co.uk



VERDICT PACKED WITH USEFUL TRIATHLON-SPECIFIC FEATURES BUT IT'S PRETTY PRICEY

