

Time trial saddles

CW takes an in-depth look at five seats made for speed

What

Saddles with a stubby design have become increasingly popular and are intended to increase comfort in the time trial position by reducing pressure on the perineum.

Stubby saddles are also popular with riders who need to conform to the UCI's 5cm rule, which stipulates that the tip of the saddle must be at least 5cm behind the bottom bracket. The vast majority of us who ride British time trials under CTT rules and regulations don't need to worry about this though.

The short nose is often combined with a relief channel, a cut-out or, in the case of ISM, a gap.

Why

The first time trial-specific saddles were for triathletes and featured a taller nose with extra padding but without extra width to avoid chafing. Today's tri and TT saddles have a short nose or no nose at all to help maintain blood flow, reducing genital numbness and possible long-term damage for men and women.

How

Since in time trialling aerodynamics matter more than weight, comfort is the biggest factor we've assessed here since it enhances a time triallist's ability to hold an aerodynamic position and therefore go faster.

HOW WE SCORE

- 10 - Superb, best in its class and we couldn't fault it.
- 9 - Excellent, a slight change and it would be perfect
- 8 - Brilliant, we'd happily buy it
- 7 - Solid, but there's better out there
- 6 - Pretty good, but not quite hitting the mark
- 5 - OK, nothing wrong with it, but nothing special
- 4 - A few niggles let this down
- 3 - Disappointing
- 2 - Poor, approach with caution
- 1 - Terrible, do not buy this product

Pro Stealth £129.99

Pro teamed up with Giant-Alpecin to develop the Stealth, which is designed both for road race and time trial use to meet the needs of both men and women who ride long and low.

As well as having a wide cut-out, the Stealth is wider at the nose, allowing the rider to use more of the front of the saddle.

Pro says it has also positioned the saddle's padding to distribute pressure whether riding on the hoods, in the drops or on aero bars.

Pro claims a weight of 172g for the Stealth in the carbon-railed version which retails for £174.99. Our test saddle was the titanium-railed version which, although claimed at 210g, weighed in at 207g.

There are 142mm or 152mm widths.

Both male and female testers got on well



Weight
207
grams

with the design. We found it ideal for when you get into one position and stay there. The relief channel did away with the soft-tissue pain that can be associated with this type of riding.

A very good starting point for anyone looking for a seat that will reduce pressure and compression in an aggressive position.

10

www.madison.co.uk

Specialized S-Works Power £220

The S-Works Power comes in 143mm or 155mm options; both are very wide since it's specifically conceived for riders who prefer a more aggressive and forward position, or who spend a lot of time on the drops or their aero extensions. In an upright position you may even feel the wide back clipping your hamstrings — clearly it's not designed for that type of riding.

At first glance it might appear that the nose is rather thin compared to the back of the saddle. This is not the case and is due to the cut-out middle of the saddle, which is there to do the job of increasing blood flow and reducing perineal pressure.

The S-Works Power has an inner core of carbon-fibre and scant padding to keep weight low. The oval rails are also carbon.



Weight
159
grams

Check if it will fit your seatpost before buying, as you may need an adaptor: the oversized 7x9mm carbon rails are not compatible with seatposts equipped with a side-load clamp for 7mm.

Not only is this saddle very comfortable when in an aero position, but the grippy surface keeps you in position.

9

www.specialized.com

Cobb Plus 2 £157.51

In the words of its own marketing team, "The Cobb Plus saddle is not the cutest kid in the classroom." It is, however, designed by John Cobb — aka Mr Wind Tunnel — to eliminate numbness in the perineum. It features a cut nose that's lower than the rest of the saddle and is specially designed to dissipate heat and moisture.

Its 40mm nose-width (130mm at the back) is not as extreme as other time trial saddles on the market because Cobb believes too-wide saddles cause inner-leg chafing.

Our first impression was of a relief and comfort we had never felt on a saddle before, even though this was on a time trial bike.

We were also impressed by the foam padding and the relief channel. When sitting

on the saddle the nose widens beneath you and the feeling of having the extra surface while pedalling was really great.

The updated Plus 2, released since we reviewed the original, has slightly softer foam, the edges of the seat base are more sculpted and a few seams have been changed to reduce chafing.



Weight
294
grams

9

www.cobbcycling.com

Fizik Mistica £229.99

The Mistica's shape is very similar to that of the popular Fizik Arione, the difference being that it features a relief channel and has the nose chopped off.

It's also available in a Kium-railed (titanium alloy) version at £164.99. This is only 30 grams heavier than the carbon-railed

version and has the same profile.

The Mistica has a cover made from a tacky material to help keep you in place when riding on the rivet, and it works really well.

There is a removable, integrated carriage

holder for the rear. This is intended for triathletes or those doing very long time trials as it allows you to mount additional kit such as bottles.

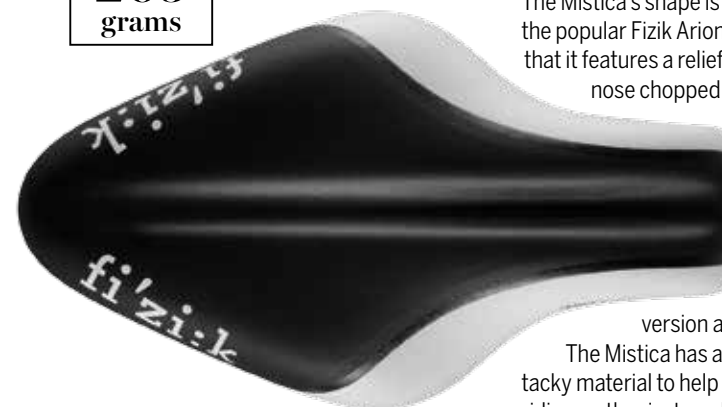
We fitted it in the same position as the long-nosed Arione K1, and found the Mistica greatly relieved perineal pressure.

There are two widths for different-sized sit bones. The rail is 85mm long, meaning lots of potential fore-aft adjustment too.

Saddle comfort is subjective, but if you are looking for a TT saddle and get on well with the Fizik Arione then this is well worth consideration.

9

www.extrauk.co.uk



Weight
205
grams

ISM PN 3.0 £160

US brand ISM's patented design eliminates the nose of the saddle altogether in order to avoid damage to that very sensitive tissue that you sit on when rotated forward.

The PN ('performance narrow') range offers better thigh and hamstring clearance than earlier versions thanks to a narrower 'nose' (54mm at the end) but if you've never tried one before you will still initially notice more pressure on your inner thigh than with a conventional saddle — perhaps exaggerated by the lack of pressure in the middle.

However, as your hips rotate forwards that pressure on the inner thigh lessens until, on the tri-bars and putting power through the pedals it feels completely right, allowing you to stay still, anchored and comfortable in your

aero position without your rear end shifting around as if the saddle was made of lava.

ISM doesn't go down the F1 materials route and there's not a shred of carbon, so weight-conscious TT'ers might be slightly disappointed.

However, for pure TT comfort, a healthier perineum, zero numbness and consequently better performance, the ISM PN 3.0 is a revelation.



Weight
260
grams

10

www.upgradebikes.co.uk

BEST ON TEST