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Tested

MISS GRAPE BIKEPACKING GEAR

Even if you're someone like me who's been obsessively into bikepacking for many years, Miss Grape may not be a name you're familiar with. The small Italian brand is a relative newcomer to the space, at least as far as availability in Australia is concerned.

Situated in the province of Rovigo, about halfway between Venice and Bolgna, Miss Grape offers a range of bikepacking gear designed, manufactured and tested in the area with a focus on durability, sustainability and repairability all with some aesthetic detail you'd expect from a European manufacturer.

Miss Grape work heavily with their material suppliers and manufacturers to achieve the European REACH certification standard which focusses on minimising the use of chemicals that can be harmful to both human health and the environment. Having all their products manufactured locally ensured visibility of the final processes and quality control is assured. Miss Grape have also made a commitment to sewing all of their products (as opposed to the increasingly popular process of welding materials). This does make it slightly more difficult to properly weatherproof their bags (I'll get to that in a moment) but it does substantially increase the durability of the items as well as making them much easier to repair (either professionally or at home/in the field) in the event of a failure.

Miss Grape's overall range is pretty solid but

I'll focus on a few items from their Adventure range and one more that might prove useful when starting out.

CLUSTER 13 SADDLE BAG - \$299

If you've been researching some bikepacking stuff one thing you'll realise pretty quick is a lot of the stuff is pretty similar. The Cluster range of bikepacking saddle bags uses a proven mounting system that many brands have used over the years. Two nylon straps run under the saddle rails and attach via robust clips to the base support of the bag. Stability is then maintained by two straps around the seatpost. It's a system that offers more than enough stability for use on gravel roads or smooth singletrack but even with the bag packed very snugly and the straps cinched right down there's still a lot of sway when climbing out of the saddle or getting a bit rowdy descending. This certainly has a noticeable affect on handling but that's not an uncommon trade-off for being able to safely haul some gear.

In a nod to proper offroad use the underside of the bag features a double thickness, reinforced material to reduce risk of damage due to a tyre scrub. This is a great feature if you're really pushing the limits of the packable space between your saddle and tyre. I assume part of the reason Miss Grape added this was for those of us wanting to use the bag with a



dropper post. Unfortunately (as someone who regularly uses my personal 14 litre saddle bag with my dropper) this isn't really possible with the Cluster 13. The dual straps take up a lot of real estate on the seatpost meaning there was no available drop in my post anyway.

The Cluster 13 does appear to be very waterproof for stitched bag. I didn't get the opportunity to ride with it in the wet but I did give it a solid blasting with the Karcher when cleaning my bike and there was no apparent ingress. Miss Grape use a slightly different construction for the internals of the otherwise common looking Cluster, featuring an internal weatherproof skin that's bonded to the inside of the finished stitched bag. It seems extremely effective at keeping the elements out and I'm honestly surprised I haven't seen this previously from another brand. Well done Miss Grape.

Overall the Cluster 13 promises to be an extremely durable bag well suited to long term remote use.



NODE ADVENTURE TOP TUBE BAG - \$119

A top tube bag is pretty much a necessity for any bikepacking setup. It puts things you want easy access to well within reach and hopefully keeps them pretty dry. The Node Adventure is one of the nicer top tube bags I've used, and I've used a lot.

The underside features an extremely grippy nylon surface that really grabs hold of the top tube making it the most stable bag of this style I've ever used. I also REALLY like having external side pockets on a top tube bag and it's a feature not enough brands offer. Great place to store lip balm, snack wrapper and even tubeless repair gear. The zip is a little bit agricultural but looks and feels like it ought to last

forever. The interior green colour of the Node is really pleasing but maybe not quite bright enough to be able to easily see the bag's contents in lower light. Otherwise, this little bag is very good and I don't want to give it back. \$119 places it a little bit above most of it's competition but it's actually a little bit better than all of them too so I'm not mad about it.

BUD FEED BAG - \$84.95

I've never really gotten along with feed bags. Usually they're a little too big and I end up smashing my knee on them climbing out of the saddle. Not so, for some reason, with the Bud. It's only a tiny bit smaller than things like the Revelate Designs Mountain Feed Bag, but it's enough that it is tucked nicely and out of the way. Just like the Node it's also super stable. If your stem is shorter than 70mm the stem strap might be tricky to attach as it's pretty wide. I have to get a bit creative to get it to nicely mount to my 50mm Paul Components Boxcar but it did work. Again external pockets make an appearance and I'm just as big a fan of their existence. The pull-top enclosure is easily operated with one hand, helping keep your M&Ms dry when it's drizzling. Again, this is a really good product from Miss Grape. At \$84.95 it's also very well priced for what ought to be a long lived piece of your exploring kit.



MOON HANDLEBAR BAG - \$129

Aimed more at the commuter market, the Moon bar bag would actually be a very useful piece of kit for shorter trips involving some accommodation. I'm always amazed at how much stuff this style of bar bag will handle and the Moon is no exception to this rule. I easily got a lunch burrito, my jacket, a half day of snacks and some gloves in this thing with room to spare. As with the Node and Bud this thing is extremely stable with not even a murmur of wiggle on rough terrain. \$129 puts it right in the mix as far as value goes with other bags in this genre.

Overall the Miss Grape range offers fantastic durability and weatherproofness with a unique aesthetic despite how similar a lot of bikepacking gear can seem. If, like me, you're a big fan of just buying a thing one time and having it really last then they ought to be on your list for sure if you are looking at bikepacking gear for the first time, or overhauling your setup.

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