

MAKE CHEAP PANNIERS

Motorcycle travel evangelist Austin Vince doesn't go in for spending big-money on alloy boxes when it comes to bike luggage. Here's his recipe for a set of cheap classic panniers

My starting point is the 1960s US army rucksack known colloquially as an Alice pack; the US armed forces love an acronym – this one means All-purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment. I got mine on eBay from a supplier in Ohio for £12 each. They come with or without a frame. I use the bags without frames.

To create a pair of panniers simply cut the nylon shoulder straps, feed on a pair of black plastic clip buckles (£2 from any camping or surplus store) and try them on your bike for size. When you're happy with the length of the straps, secure the loose end with a couple of pop rivets. Some people take their bags to a local upholsterers or saddle-stitcher and get them nicely stitched.

The pop rivets are more Soviet-looking but I've found they work just fine.

That's it, job done. And why do these bags rule? Because they're insanely cheap! Most packs have at least six external mini-pouches for your small daily needs, these boast a whopping total capacity of 140 litres, they're easy to repair (revolutionary rollover buckles are impossible to break), the bags themselves seem to get smaller if you load them lightly, and – crucially – they look totally cool. That's better than carting around a couple of giant ugly metal boxes.



HUNT AND PREPARE RABBIT

Recovery van still some time away? Hungry?

1 Your inner tube lashed to a strong, forked stick, will provide you with a makeshift catapult. Camouflage yourself by sliding twigs into your clothing and remove any noisy jackets, which could scare your quarry as you stalk it. Using stones for projectiles, aim for the head for

a quick, clean kill. If the rabbit is maimed in the hunt, stretch the neck by holding onto the back legs, and with two fingers placed in behind the head, pull sharply and firmly, applying a twist.

2 You'll want to remove the urine from your rabbit prior to butchering, as it will provide an undesirable pre-cooking marinade. Squeeze the belly of the rabbit, running your hand down towards

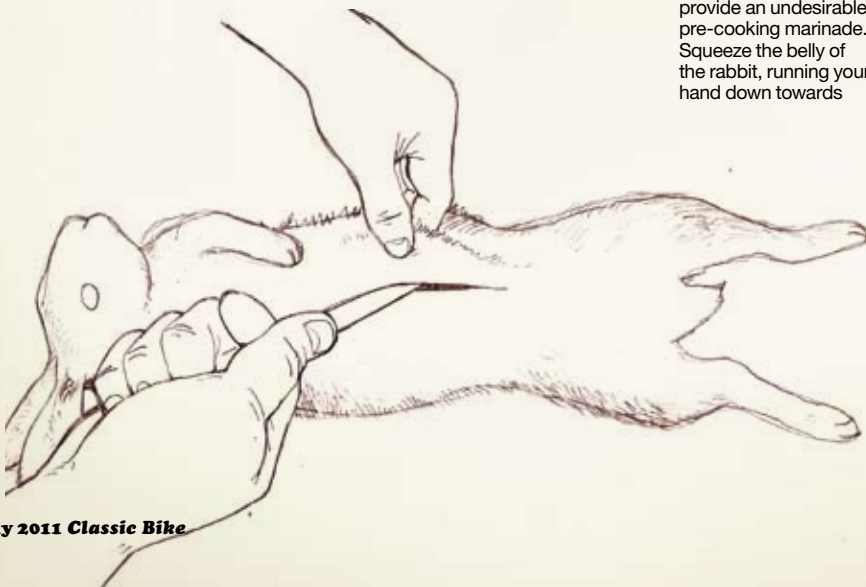
the anus. This should expel any urine.

3 Laying the rabbit on its back, use your knife to make a slit in the skin of the belly. Invert your knife so that the blade faces the sky and extend the cut all the way around the circumference of the rabbit, effectively cutting the skin into two parts. Grab each side of the 'jacket and trousers' you've now created and pull firmly. The 'trousers' should pull off easily, with the 'jacket' of the front legs stopping at the head. Simply grab the head, neck and skin and twist to sever all of this from the neck.

4 To gut the rabbit, make a cut into the belly cavity, just behind the rib cage and run it to the anus. Open up the cavity with your fingers and remove all of the

inners. Heart, lungs liver and kidneys can be saved for a barbecued starter, but discard them if you suspect the rabbit has been feeding on poisonous plants.

5 If survival is the order of the day, boiling the rabbit whole will save all nutrients. Bones can even be boiled until they are soft and consumed. If, however, you have planned for your misfortune, reach into your pre-packed 'survival condiments' pouch and smother sweet chilli sauce liberally over the entire rabbit. Whittle a stick, impale your rabbit onto it firmly, and barbecue it over a good bed of hardwood embers... delicious.





RIDE 500 MILES FAST

Need to cover 500 miles really rather quickly? 1973 Thruxton 500* miles winner Norman White tells you how

GET BIKE-FIT

"In its day the Thruxton 500-mile race was a round of the world endurance championship and a prestigious event. All the factories wanted to win it and victory helped sell everything, from Commandos to oil and Dunlop tyres.

"Prior to the '73 race I hadn't raced for a couple of years – I was full-time as an engineer, test rider and mechanic so I didn't have time. But they needed someone to partner Rex Butcher and my name was put forward. I was very nervous before the race. I was only about 23 years old and this was a big deal, everyone would be watching. I'd done countless laps of Thruxton as part of my job but I wanted to be sure I'd be okay through the long stints, so I borrowed a police bike from Neale Shilton, who was in charge of them. I rode it endlessly in the weeks before the race but fell off it with about a fortnight to go, banging my legs up a bit. Neale was a bit miffed about that."

KNOW THAT THE BIKE IS SORTED

"The engine was pretty stock, over-the-counter production racer. I remember being passed by Percy Tait at one point – we seemed to be about 5-10mph down on them – but we had the reliability, which was key. I prepared the chassis, which had the NVPS big single-sided disc brake at the front, the righthand-side exhausts and the Isolastics set up with a few extra rubbers to make the chassis more rigid."

STAY OUT OF TROUBLE

"In the race we just cracked on and did our own thing. I seemed to be forever coming up on backmarkers, everything from TZ250 Yamahas and single-cylinder Ducatis to Laverda SFCs and CB500 Hondas. The trick is to keep looking ahead, spot them early, judge their speed, work out where you'll catch them and go in with a plan, so you can give them a wide berth. Thruxton is a great place to race a motorcycle and it's wide too, so getting past wasn't a problem.

"It turned into a race of attrition, but our stops were like clockwork; change riders, get a push down to the pump, fill up, get back out. The bike never needed oil. One set of tyres, Dunlop TT100s. A stint would last about an hour at a time as I recall, and I didn't find maintaining concentration a problem. I loved riding at Thruxton and Church was just a fantastic corner, fast and bumpy. MCN's Cecil Bailey got a great shot of me there cranked right over with the rear wheel off the

ground. He told me I was the fastest man he'd seen through there, and it did seem to be the part of the track on which I really gained on people."

PUSH YOUR LUCK...

"The Triumph triples were fast but they had no end of trouble – electrics, broken rocker arms... Dave Croxford and Percy also lost time repairing an exhaust and changing their back wheel. Rex rode the penultimate stint and we had a good lead when he came in to hand over to me, but the rear tyre was in a state, bald on the left-hand side and through to the canvas in places. ["I've never been sideways so often before," Butcher told *MotorCycle News* man Norrie Whyte. "It was really frightening riding with the tyre in the condition it was."]

"The Dunlop technician wanted to put a new back wheel and tyre in but we just weren't set up to do that – we had a lead but we'd have lost it all and more had we changed the wheel. Instead I headed out and just tried to get round as quickly and as gently as I could. I think was about three or four seconds a lap slower than I'd been going previously, but the bike made it home and we won, having covered 190 laps."

*The 1973 race was shortened to 447.6 miles to fit in with local church services – times they were a-changing. The Thruxton circuit is now limited to just 12 days racing a year.