

TUBELESS WHEELS

BUYERS GUIDE

Say farewell to pinch punctures and discover the joys of faster spinning hoops into the bargain!

Tubeless tyres must be the slowest-burn tech innovation in cycling history.

Incredibly, it was last decade that French tyre brand Hutchinson began producing tubeless tyres for the road and yet only now has this idea gained enough traction for wheel manufacturers to noticeably start making compatible products.

By removing the friction between the inner tube and the tyre, a tubeless wheel spins faster plus the threat of pinch punctures – caused by inner tubes getting ‘pinched’ between the rim of the wheel and the road – is all but eliminated.

So upgrading to tubeless wheels is a bit of a no-brainer, especially as they’re also compatible with regular clincher tyres so you don’t need to sling your existing rubber.

Our selection here is intended as an introduction to the wide selection that’s now available on the market. We’ve included many big names as well as wheels from across the price spectrum, featuring aluminium sets, carbon ones, plus hybrids of both.

HUNT SPRINT AERO WIDE

► It’s not often a brand manages to create such a splash as Hunt has managed to do in the mid-to-low end of the wheel market. So massive kudos to the Sussex-based firm. The wheel in question is the Sprint Aero Wide with its eye-catching polished silver look that strikes such a change from the dark finishes we’re so used to. More than just a fancy finish Hunt has opted for these Sprints to measure 24mm outside and 19mm inside with a rim depth of 31mm in a package that is built to be aero and weighs just under 1,500g.



OVERALL
8/10

VERDICT

A decent price and an eye-catching finish make these speedy rims doubly attractive.

£449

huntbikewheels.com

KINESIS RACE LIGHT 700

► Kinesis has built an enviable reputation for creating budget products that give the big guys a run for their money and we expect this second generation of the RL700 to continue in that trend. With a rim profile that’s 22mm wide, 19mm internally, it has a 28mm deep profile and a weight of 1,700g, which is just where we’d expect it to be for the money and the (alloy) material. This second generation gains updated hubs which are lighter weight and are built with Sapim double-butted spokes to improve strength and reduce weight for better acceleration and handling.

OVERALL
9/10



VERDICT

If you’re looking to join the tubeless revolution without wrecking your credit rating, these are a top option!

£350

upgradebikes.co.uk

BikesEtc

BEST VALUE



SCOPE R3C

► Dutch firm Scope started in 2013 with a dedicated focus on carbon wheels, of which they currently produce three road specific versions. Each are the same price but differ in rim depth. These R3s are 30mm deep, have an internal width of 19mm and 26mm between the brake tracks, and tip the scales at just 1,440g.

Designed with a Computational Fluid Dynamic programme, the rim has been tailored toward aerodynamics and thanks to the specific resin the rims are capable of handling 260°C so shouldn’t suffer with prolonged braking. Designed as a complete system, R3 uses Sapim CX-Ray spokes and a proprietary hub and rim.

VERDICT

Designed and tested using computer simulation then built from high-quality carbon. Hence the price.

£1,400

scopecycling.com

OVERALL
9/10



MAVIC COSMIC PRO SL UST

► Despite being part of the original team that pioneered the concept, Mavic initially held back on rolling out tubeless. Now, though, most of their most popular variants are available in tubeless ('UST' in the name stands for 'Universal System Tubeless'), all with matching tyres. With options starting from £390, we wanted to see what they offer at the top end. With a full carbon rim, the Cosmic Pro is lightweight (1,490g) and, because it's been developed in a wind tunnel, also fantastically aerodynamic. Featuring an internal width of 19mm, Mavic has given these a profile that makes tyre-fitting easy.



VERDICT
These are fast, light and won't cause a prolonged bout of enraged swearing during tyre fitting.

OVERALL
8.5
10
£1,579
mavic.com

ZIPP 30 COURSE

► 30 Course is all but the entry-level wheel in the world of Zipp. That said, it's not most people's idea of a budget option. As you'd expect, though, from a company that's made a name creating low-drag wheels the Course has been designed to not only be fast in the wind but stable, too, and with a 21mm internal, 25mm external dimension is pushing the boundaries of wheel width, as well. At 1,570g the rim profile adds a little mass, but there aren't many manufacturers listed here who suggest that you can take their wheels off road if you like for adventures in gravel or cyclocross.



VERDICT
These aluminium hoops are as fast as they are durable, making them a truly versatile option.

£914 zipp.com

OVERALL
7
10

WHAT MAKES TUBELESS RIMS DIFFERENT?

► With no inner tube to hold the air both the inside of the tyre and the rim need to be airtight – that means either a sealed rim, with no spoke holes (as in Mavic's UST wheels), or a rim tape that seals the holes. Keeping air in is only part of the conundrum. Getting the tyre to seal is where the real art and science is to rim design. The internal profile needs to provide a seat for the tyre bead to sit in while being fitted and keep it firmly against the hook without letting air out, so the profile is very specific – some standard clinchers can be converted to tubeless but it's not advised.



BikesEtc
BEST IN TEST

SHIMANO RS700 TL

► Once in a while Shimano create a technology that no one else has thought of, and that's what we're seeing with the carbon laminate rim of which these 30mm deep RS700s – the first in the country. Originally found on DuraAce, carbon laminate has come down the range but are also been refined in this latest generation. The rim is covered with a thin layer of carbon fibre to give that carbon aesthetic whilst retaining an alloy brake surface, which also just happens to offer a fabulous ride, too.

Weight is 1,601g, and the rim measures 21mm externally so is suitable for 23-32c tyres.

VERDICT
Combines carbon's good looks with the all-weather braking performance of alloy to provide a wonderful ride.

£749.99
madison.co.uk

OVERALL
9.5
10

DEDA ZERO2 TEAM

► These alloy hoops display all the expertise for which Italian brand Deda is renowned. Lightweight rims have 25mm depth, and 16mm internal/22mm external width, and the machined finish is impeccable, while hubs spin smoothly on sealed Enduro bearings. There's no doubt that these are well-built wheels, with little in the way of lateral flex – an asymmetric spoke pattern on the rear wheel helps with stiffness, while modest weight (1,550g) makes them a good choice for all-round riding duties. Although they're not marketed as tubeless-ready, the rim's internal profile suggests otherwise and in fact we've been using them in a tubeless set-up for a few months so we're happy to recommend them as such.

VERDICT
Well-built, durable all-rounders at a good price, these are an attractive option for training duties.

£559.99
chickencyclekit.co.uk

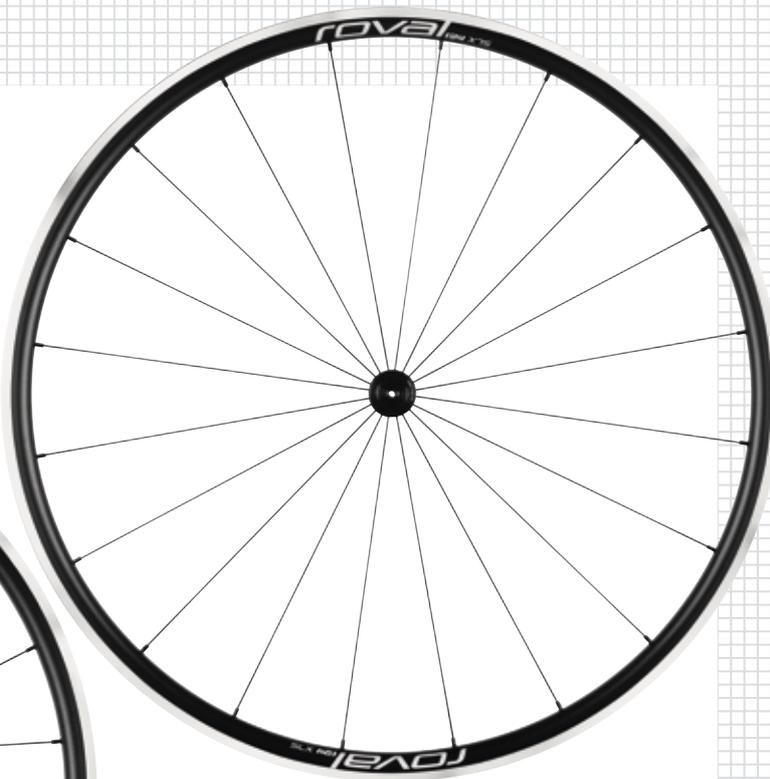


OVERALL
8
10



ROVAL SLX 24

► You can pretty much rely on Specialized to come up with a fun play on words whenever they can for its products. And its wheel brand Roval clearly carries the same DNA, as the spec sheet states that the SLX 24 are (wait for it) 2Bliss-ready! One of the dearer aluminium rimmed versions, SLX scores well all-round, with an attractive square profile that measures 20mm internal width, 24 external and 24mm depth. The braking surface, meanwhile, is machined for a precision feel whilst the spokes and freehub internals are from highly respected company DT Swiss. Overall weight? A paltry 1,495g.



VERDICT

Not the cheapest but this aluminium option ticks the boxes marked sturdy, lightweight and attractive.

OVERALL
7.5
10

🏷️ £605

🌐 specialized.com

BONTRAGER AURA 5 TLR

► As a means of combining the best of both worlds, Bontrager's Aura 5 wheels make a great play, since they feature alloy rims with a carbon fibre fairing adding strength and aerodynamics without too much additional cost or mass. That said they still hit the scales at 1,720g. The carbon fairing offers the same 50mm deep 'D3' profile as is offered on the most range-topping wheels, yet still keeps alloy brake performance for better wet-weather stopping. Aura's rim cross section is 17.5mm inner and 23mm outer so shouldn't offer fit problems to most frames. 🚲

VERDICT

This carbon/alloy hybrid is tough and aero, but fairly chunky. In fact, they're the heaviest featured here.

🏷️ £900

🌐 trekbikes.com

OVERALL
7
10

