



## NOVARA STRADA \$1,200 *Solidity over sexiness*

**NO MISTAKES:** Brands that aren't huge or subject to idol worship often put together the most sensible bikes, and so it is with Novara, the house brand of REI. This price-conscious, solid-performing mix of components, matched with no-frills, no-nonsense 6000-series aluminum frame tubing and geometry, will take you through your first few years of bike obsession—or longer if you find your level and stay there happily. **BUT:** In our riding experience, Strada's 6000-series frame isn't quite as snappy as those found on Specialized or Schwinn bikes in this price range. And unless you live near an REI store, you'll pay about \$70 more for shipping. **SIZES:** 47, 51, 55, 57, 60cm **FRAME:** AN6 aluminum **FORK:** EVO carbon fiber **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** Shimano 105 brake/shift levers, derailleurs, triple crank (30/42/52), bottom bracket, 9-speed cassette (12/25); Ritchey Comp stem and seatpost, BioMAX Comp handlebar; Selle San Marco ERA Luxe saddle; Vittoria Rubino TT tires **CONTACT:** 800/426-4840; novarabike.com—*B.S.*



## SPECIALIZED ALLEZ ELITE TRIPLE \$1,200 *Ride fast, ride long*

**PLUSH TOUCHES:** Both the fork and handlebar use Specialized's Zertz vibration-damping inserts to smooth out vibration from the road—an innovation that Specialized claims lessens fatigue, improves control and boosts overall ride quality. Classic road geometry and a spec chosen with one eye on weight mean you don't just putter around. **DIAL IT IN:** Novice riders will love the four-position stem, which lets you experiment to find your favorite riding stance. **SIZES:** 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 62cm **FRAME:** Columbus SLX double-butted aluminum **FORK:** Specialized Carbon Zertz, aluminum steerer **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** Shimano 105 brake/shift levers, derailleurs and 9-speed cassette (12/25); FSA Gossamer triple crankset (30/42/52) and bottom bracket; Specialized handlebar, stem, seatpost and Mondo Comp tires; Alex A-Class wheelset **CONTACT:** 408/779-6229; specialized.com—*B.S.*



## RALEIGH GRAND SPORT \$560 *Nice parts, nice deal*

**NO HIDDEN AGENDA:** The hubs, cassette, chain and parts that aren't visible (but are crucial to a bike's performance) all come from Shimano, a rare but very welcome highlight on a bike of this price. **UP AND DOWN:** The stem angle is adjustable, allowing you to try different bar heights until you find your sweet spot. **STOP!** A second set of levers allows you to brake from the bar tops, instead of always reaching for the hoods or drops. **SIZES:** 47, 50, 53, 56, 59, 62cm **FRAME:** Kinesis Atomic 13 aluminum **FORK:** Kinesis carbon-fiber fork, chromoly steerer **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** Shimano Sora 8-speed shifter/brake levers and rear derailleur, FD-2200 front derailleur, 2200 hubs; Truvativ Touro cranks (30/42/52); Tektro dual-pivot brakes; Alex rims; Kenda K152 25c tires; Raleigh handlebar and stem; Avenir saddle **CONTACT:** 800/222-5527; raleighusa.com—*Matt Phillips*

### ACCESSORIES



#### Lake CX 101 shoe

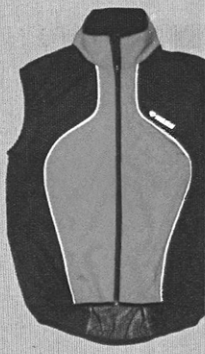
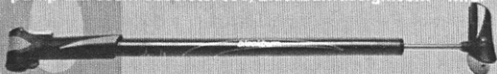
**HOT:** Leather-and-mesh upper will last through the seasons, and the two hook-and-loop-fasteners with laces beneath ensure a secure fit. Stiff, fiberglass-injected nylon soleplate accepts many top cleat patterns. **NOT:** Don't expect to be able to stroll around the café in comfort. \$75; www.lakecycling.com—*Mike Cushionbury*

#### Pearl Izumi Zephrr vest

**HOT:** A must-have piece of equipment that offers wind and water resistance, with a hydrophobic mesh back for excellent breathability. **NOT:** Buy it, but don't let it give you a false sense of security—it won't help during major weather swings. \$55; pearlizumi.com—*M.C.*

#### Blackburn Frame pump

**HOT:** The anatomically shaped T-handle with new spring-loaded head makes this a user-friendly pump in the field—and you can't beat the air volume of a frame pump. Soft rubber ends on all four sizes guarantee a secure fit on most bike frames. **NOT:** In an era of good working minis, the full frame pump can seem obsolete. \$30; blackburndesign.com—*M.C.*



**GT:** Mountain bike innovator; its iDrive suspension design is one of mountain biking's most enduring