

# Four Helmets for the Road

To flip or not to flip is just one of the questions

**H**EADING OUT FOR LONG DAYS IN THE SADDLE? WE WERE WHEN preparing for February's four-bike sport-touring comparison ("High Speed, Low Altitude"), so we gathered a quartet of current or recently introduced medium-priced full-face helmets seemingly well-suited for such duty. We chose a pair with flip-up chinbars and a pair with fixed chinbars to get a grip on the comfort/convenience/noise quotient provided by these two popular on-road helmet styles.

## HJC IS-MAX BT

THIS IS A BUDGET-MINDED, POLYCARBONATE-SHELL, DOT-APPROVED modular helmet with a starting MSRP of \$199.99 for solid colors (metallic, pictured, is \$209.99; add subdued graphics and the price is \$219.99). It's also Bluetooth ready (the "BT") and set up for easy and tidy installation of an optional ChatterBox commu-

nication system (\$249.95).

Fit for our XL tester was good, and the crown and cheek pads are removable for cleaning. The large, front-and-center chinbar release is convenient but also quite exposed, which may increase the likelihood that the chinbar could inadvertently open in a crash. The integrated, spring-loaded, drop-down tinted inner sunshade is convenient and retracts with the push of a button. But it rested close to our tester's nose and was difficult to release when subjected to upward pressure on the lens' edge, giving us concern as to what may happen to a rider's nose in a crash. The drop-down sunshades fitted to other helmets tested here were easier to push up from inside the helmet.

The IS-MAX was fairly noisy and drafty (there's a narrow, abbreviated strip of fuzzy fabric meant to act as a seal between the flip portion and main shell), but the shield is easy to remove

and overall comfort was at a "day-long" level. For the money, this HJC ([www.hjchelmets.com](http://www.hjchelmets.com)) has an impressive number of features.

## Shoei QWEST

THE NEW DOT/SNELL M2010-APPROVED Shoei QWEST helmet targets the touring segment with an emphasis on quiet comfort while retaining much of the look and functionality found in Shoei's pure sport-riding helmets, making it a natural sport-touring lid.

Shell construction is of a material Shoei calls AIM+ that utilizes fiberglass and "organic fibers." The impact-absorbing interior foam continues along the chinbar. The cheekpads are removable, and there are many different thicknesses available to enhance fit; there is also an eyeglass channel and molded-in earphone pockets.

We found the fit to be excellent for a



variety of staffers, lending credence to Shoei's use of five shell sizes throughout the QWEST size range.

Long-range comfort is further enhanced by what Shoei ([www.shoei-helmets.com](http://www.shoei-helmets.com)) calls "noise reduction technology" (optimized shell aerodynamics/liner components and spring-loaded shield base plates for a wind and waterproof seal when lowered). It works: This is the quietest helmet we've ever tested.

The ventilation system proved very effective when cooling airflow was desired yet didn't feel drafty when the entry and exhaust vents were closed in colder conditions. The QWEST, while not particularly inexpensive (\$469.99 as shown; solid colors \$369.99), represents true value that delivers on its billing as a top-tier touring-oriented helmet.

because it flips forward, never opening itself to direct flow and causing turbulence as the air enters the opening.

Though heavy for a non-flip full-face lid (the QWEST is 8 ounces lighter), the Scorpion ([www.scorpionusa.com](http://www.scorpionusa.com)) offers an integrated, drop-down tinted sunshade that is easy to push up from inside should it impact your nose during a crash. Still, the EXO 1000 is heavier than both integrated-sunshade-equipped flip-face helmets here by an ounce or two, including the weight of their respective Bluetooth setups. Aerodynamics were very good, allowing buffet-free, "non-directional" behavior, even when the tester would turn his head to the side at speed.

## Vemar Jiano Bluetooth

THIS DOT- AND ECE-APPROVED FLIP-UP full-face helmet comes equipped with a Bluetooth mic and stereo speakers for \$500, but it also is available without Bluetooth for \$275. It is solidly constructed with a plastic shell and very nicely made removable, washable interior. The flip-up locking mechanism

is secure with a well-protected release button that is unlikely to be accidentally deployed during a crash. A scratch-resistant, anti-fog clear faceshield is supplemented by a drop-down inner sunshade that was well clear of our tester's nose and easy to push up from inside.

The Jiano is comfortable but draftier and noisier than the more-expensive flip-up Shoei Multitec that our tester sometimes wears. The chinstrap uses a snap-together buckle that makes on/off quick and easy; but the mechanism is made of metal and plastic that can be uncomfortable against the neck, partly because the pads that fit between buckle and chin do not adequately stay in place, and partly because having hard parts in that sensitive area is a bad idea.

Our tester was stuck between Medium and Large sizes and thought the smaller of the two would have been quieter and provided a better fit, but he was unable to latch the chinbar. Overall, this Vemar ([www.motonation.com](http://www.motonation.com)) is a nicely made helmet but, like the HJC, could do with reduced wind noise and better sealing, particularly if you intended to use Bluetooth. ☐



## Scorpion EXO 1000 Sublim

THE \$309.95 EXO 1000 FEATURES A Kevlar-reinforced fiberglass shell and is Snell M2005 and DOT-approved. Fit is customizable with a built-in pump and inflatable bladders behind each cheekpad. Graphics are of decent but not great quality, and the anti-fog/anti-scratch (and easily removable) faceshield performed as advertised.

Our medium-headed tester found fit tight at the forehead. The KwikWick moisture-wicking liner is easily removable for washing.

Noise levels were reasonable, especially with all the vents closed and the cheekpads pumped up tight, but increased incrementally when the vents were opened. The chin vent, in particular, was noisy and not very effective

## Scorpion EXO 1000 Sublim

### Ups

- ▲ Drop-down internal sunshade rare on fixed-chinbar helmets
- ▲ Fit-enhancing inflatable cheekpad bladders
- ▲ Sano aerodynamics

### Downs

- ▼ No earphone pockets
- ▼ Heavy
- ▼ Cheesy molded in "Allen" bolts on top

## Shoei QWEST

### Ups

- ▲ Superb (customizable) fit and comfort
- ▲ No drafts or leaks in cold, wet weather
- ▲ Quietest helmet we've ever worn

### Downs

- ▼ Give up graphics, save money
- ▼ Your old Shoei shields are obsolete
- ▼ Most-expensive helmet here

## HJC IS-MAX BT

### Ups

- ▲ A lot of helmet for the \$
- ▲ Comfortable
- ▲ Bluetooth-ready

### Downs

- ▼ Bluetooth setup costs more than the helmet
- ▼ No impact foam in chinbar
- ▼ Drafty, noisy