

## SADDLE UP *by Reanne Atherton*

I remember when I used to work in my local bicycle shop, more often than not, the swapping of the standard saddle seemed to be a regular occurrence. The bike would be purchased, the mechanic would do all of the safety checks and within minutes the request for a more comfortable saddle would be made. It may even have taken someone a week or so to put up with a sore rear end before they came marching back into the store in quest of eliminating that uncomfortable feeling. This saddle dilemma was more noticeable amongst the female customers in particular. For the men it wasn't as much of a priority to them.

With so much choice out there now, it can be a minefield. From the untrained eye they can all look the same. There are subtle differences in each one. Believe it or not, some of the most comfortable saddles are the hardest looking ones. It's not always about that squidgy

feel you think you need; hoping someone has come up with a mini sofa construction at long last. The comfort comes from the sit bones being correctly positioned on the saddle and that the angle is spot on so that there is no unnecessary pressure where there shouldn't be.

Different cycling disciplines all require the body to be in a variety of sitting positions to get the most out of your performance. For the down on the drop bars in race mode style, the sitting position will be different to a more upright recreational rider. Therefore the saddle will differ slightly to accommodate this. So whether you are a speed demon, an endurance cyclist, a leisurely cruiser, or the off road mountain bagger; there is a saddle out there to suit your favoured discipline.

Saddle design has improved greatly and ladies are able to get a women specific fit, with the shape structured to better fit the female

anatomy. With some brands, not only do they offer a saddle for every occasion, but there is also a choice of width for that precise sit bone comfort while you are in your preferred riding position.

One very useful appliance I used to encourage customers to use was the body geometry bum measurer! Once customers had got over the embarrassment of my straight faced suggestion of measuring their bottom, they actually found it very useful. It is a fairly accurate tool for measuring your sit bones. Simply a soft pad made up of memory foam leaving an imprint of the sit bones.

Being more of an endurance cyclist myself, it wasn't long before I was on the lookout for a saddle which would still be comfortable even after miles of sitting on it. I fully understand the importance of finding that perfect companion. Once you've found it, if I was you I wouldn't let it go!

