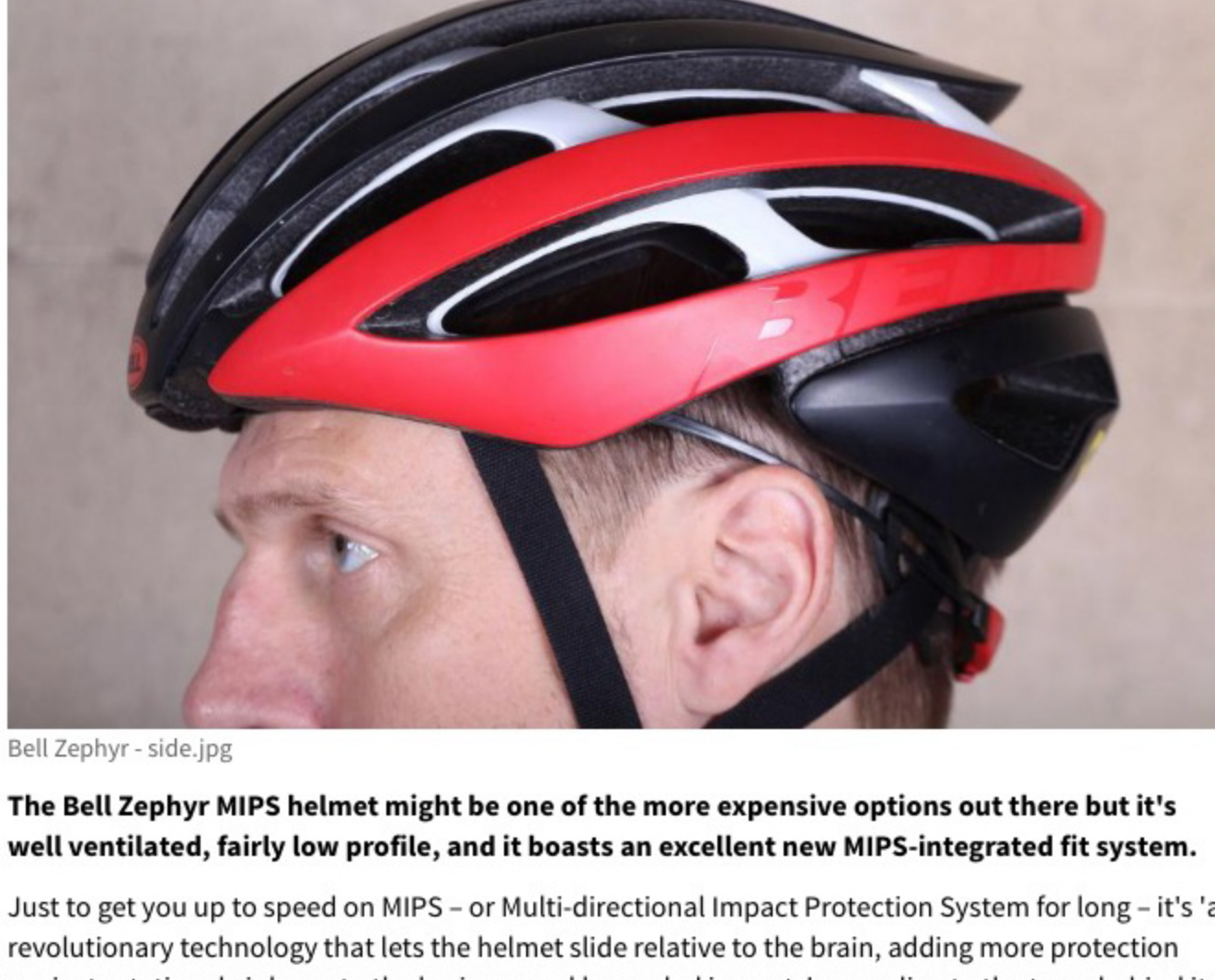


Bell Zephyr MIPS helmet

★★★★★ by [Mat Brett](#) January 16 2017

Verdict: Innovative, well-vented lid with an excellent new MIPS-integrated fit system

Weight: 288g

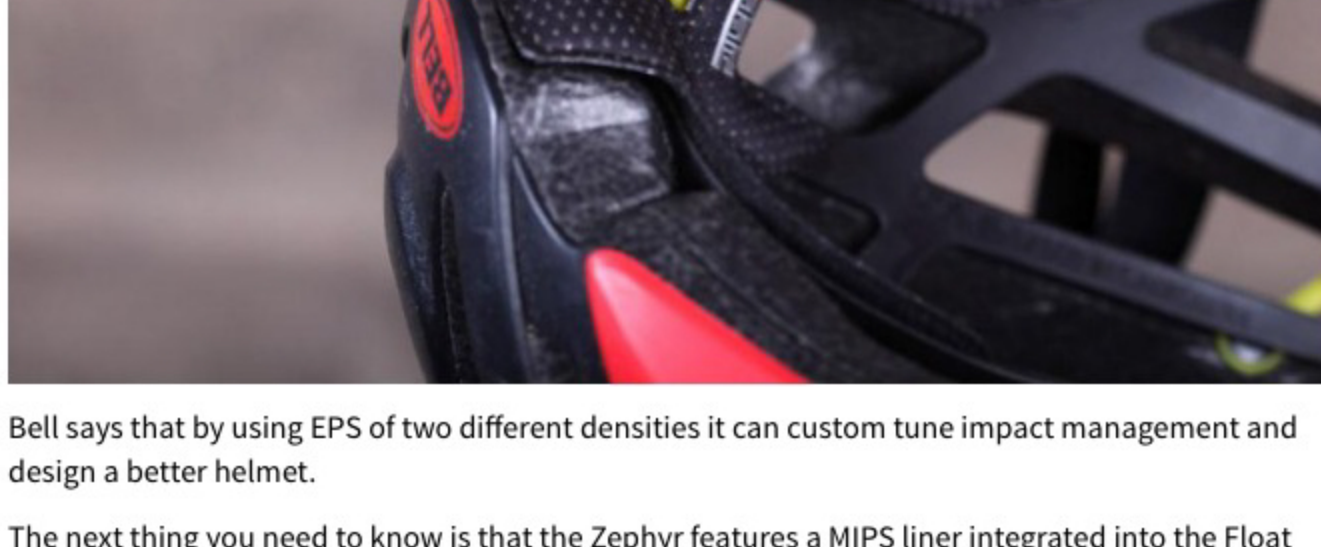


Bell Zephyr - side.jpg

The Bell Zephyr MIPS helmet might be one of the more expensive options out there but it's well ventilated, fairly low profile, and it boasts an excellent new MIPS-integrated fit system.

Just to get you up to speed on MIPS – or Multi-directional Impact Protection System for long – it's a revolutionary technology that lets the helmet slide relative to the brain, adding more protection against rotational violence to the brain caused by angled impacts', according to the team behind it. I'll come back to MIPS in a mo.

One unique feature of this helmet is that it uses a new patented manufacturing technique called Progressive Layering Construction. There's a high density EPS (expanded polystyrene) outer shell, and a lower density EPS inner shell next to your head. The two elements are produced separately, each in-moulded in its own polycarbonate shell, before being joined together. You can easily see where they meet and you can very slightly move the two parts separately.



Bell says that by using EPS of two different densities it can custom tune impact management and design a better helmet.

The next thing you need to know is that the Zephyr features a MIPS liner integrated into the Float Fit Race retention system. Sorry for the jargon, I'll explain it.

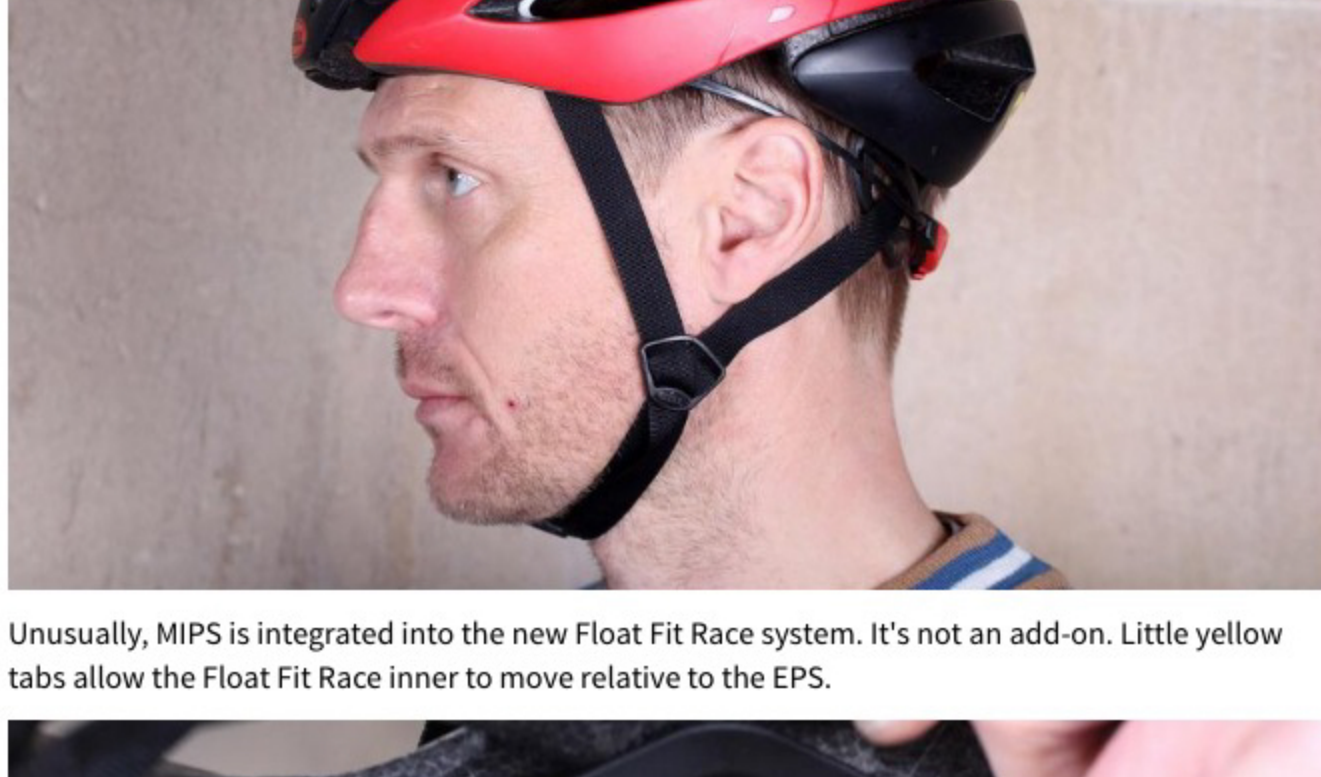


The Float Fit Race system is the bit of the helmet you can adjust to change the fit. You get three points of adjustment: a clicky dial at the rear, 22mm of up/down movement of the cradle at the back of your head, and you can also alter the lateral position of each of the two occipital pads (at the rear) independently – so you can have the pad on the right positioned further out than the pad on the left, for example, if that better suits the shape of your head.



The system works on the entire circumference of your head. I found it to be comfortable and very simple to adjust, even on the fly and in big winter gloves.

The lightweight straps sit flat against your face and neck thanks to Bell's Tri-Glide dividers. I really like them. Twisted straps are the devil's work. As well as adding to the neatness, Bell says that these improve aerodynamic efficiency – twisted straps add drag – but it doesn't make any overall aero claims for the helmet.



Unusually, MIPS is integrated into the new Float Fit Race system. It's not an add-on. Little yellow tabs allow the Float Fit Race inner to move relative to the EPS.



The idea is that this 'manages a wide range of impacts while giving the designers the opportunity to create larger and more effective vents'. It also makes for a lower profile and a closer fit; adding MIPS usually makes a helmet 1.7mm tighter.

We can't comment on the safety aspects of this helmet, although it of course meets the relevant standards. The whole MIPS thing convinces me, but you can make your own mind up on that.

The Zephyr certainly provides plenty of ventilation. View the frontal profile of the helmet and the vents take up a king-sized amount of space. The air that comes in is channelled over the top of your head to keep you feeling cool most of the time. This is a very airy helmet.



You get X-Static antibacterial padding inside, one interesting feature being that a tab of that padding extends from the inside of the helmet across the bottom of the EPS right at the front of the helmet. The idea is that sweat moves down to this section of padding because of the angle of your head as you ride, and then drips off in front of your eyewear.

It's a clever idea and it does work to an extent, but it doesn't eliminate the problem entirely. I still got sweat on my specs occasionally but not as much as usual, so it's a definite positive.

Weighing in at 288g (size medium), the Zephyr is lightweight but not super-light, although MIPS always adds a little. It certainly didn't feel in any way heavy in use.

Overall, the Zephyr has really impressed me over the past few months. It's comfortable, easy to adjust, low profile and very well vented. If you can afford a high-end lid and you're convinced by the arguments for MIPS, it's definitely one you should consider.

Verdict

Innovative, well-vented lid with an excellent new MIPS-integrated fit system

road.cc test report

Make and model: Bell Zephyr

Size tested: Medium

Tell us what the product is for, and who it's aimed at. What do the manufacturers say about it? How does that compare to your own feelings about it?

Bell says, "From lung-searing cyclocross laps to long days filled with steep climbs, Zephyr fits and feels so good that you'll forget its there. That's the whole point. The most innovative road helmet Bell has ever created follows years of research, analysis and real-world testing. The result? An uncompromising level of performance."

Tell us some more about the technical aspects of the product?

Bell lists these features:

Progressive Layering

Fusion In-Mold Polycarbonate Shell

Float Fit Race (integrated with MIPS layer)

No-twist Tri-Glides

X-Static Padding

Sweat Guide Padding

Lightweight Straps

Sunglass Guides

Integrated Reflectivity

MIPS (integrated with Float Fit Race)

Rate the product for quality of construction:

9/10

The build quality is first rate throughout.

Rate the product for performance:

9/10

It's well ventilated and extremely comfortable. I'm personally convinced of the value of MIPS.

Rate the product for durability:

8/10

Rate the product for weight (if applicable)

8/10

Rate the product for comfort (if applicable)

9/10

Rate the product for value:

6/10

This is always a tricky one with high-end kit. You can often get most of the performance at a fraction of the price.

Bell's new Stratus, available in both MIPS (£124.99) and standard (£99.99) versions, is a less costly alternative that's based on the Zephyr. Rather than the Float Fit Race system, the Stratus features a simpler Float Fit system which doesn't have the lateral adjustment of the occipital pads, for example.

Tell us how the product performed overall when used for its designed purpose

It puts in a superb performance. It's far and away the best Bell helmet I've ever used.

Tell us what you particularly liked about the product

The adjustability of the fit, the ventilation, the comfort.

Tell us what you particularly disliked about the product

The price is a difficult one to swallow.

Did you enjoy using the product? Yes

Would you consider buying the product? Yes

Would you recommend the product to a friend? Yes

Use this box to explain your score

This is a great helmet, but it's expensive. Even though the price is a hard one to take, I think the innovation means this helmet warrants an overall 9.

Overall rating: 9/10

About the tester

Age: 43 **Height:** 190cm **Weight:** 75kg

I usually ride: My best bike is:

I've been riding for: Over 20 years **I ride:** Most days **I would class myself as:** Expert

I regularly do the following types of riding: commuting, club rides, sportives, general fitness riding