

SPECIFICATION

COMPANY: CAMP Safety
ORIGIN: Italy
COST: €260
(chest harness- €90)
WEIGHT: 1.8 to 1.95kg/ 4-4.3 lbs
SIZES: S-L L-XXL
STANDARDS: CE 1019 • EN 358 • EN 81
WEB: www.camp.it

What the company blurb says:
Latest generation tree-climbing harness, with every feature designed to meet the needs of even the most demanding tree climbers. Sit harness with four attachment points: mobile front connection, ventral ring, and two side attachment points. Access Chest equipped with two fall arrest attachment points can be connected to this harness. Innovative mobile front connection system that is adjustable to change suspension position. High comfort in suspension thanks to the wide surface area and to the padding of the belt and leg-loops. Front connection of waist belt and leg-loops with spaced straps to improve comfort in the groin area. Components in aluminium alloy. Quick buckles type Speedy Alu on the leg-loops. 2 sizes.



This might seem like a european conspiracy since this is the second harness review to look at a less well known arborist brand but these were the quickest to respond to requests for kit which shows a reassuring degree of confidence in their product. Italian company CAMP has been producing climbing gear for over 120 years and is well known as a mountaineering, industrial and rescue brand. Like many others in the past few years CAMP has ‘evolved’ arborist gear as a consequence of its existing rope-related expertise. We’re very familiar with CAMP and have-liked many of its products so we were quite happy to try the Tree

Access knowing it would be well made but also knowing that it might possibly be missing a trick or two if CAMP weren’t fully in-tune with the distinct requirements of arborists. Many climbing companies think they can simply modify an existing model and hey-presto, it’s good enough for tree work. But it’s not quite that simple. First available in 2013 the Tree Access was billed as ‘the ultimate tree climbing harness: conceived by tree climbers, tested by

tree climbers’. taken from CAMP’s own literature. It was actually first produced as the Access Sit harness so was tried and tested to a degree before it was modified to become the Tree Access Sit harness. The original Access Sit harness was supplied as a ‘prolonged suspension saddle’ with a D-ring where the central soft eye now exists but otherwise both versions have pole strap D-rings (all load connection points are rated to 15kN) and each offered modular

options 1)chest harness, 2) Bosun’s chair style seat and 3)Sliding bridge. This latter component has now become an integral feature of the Tree Access rather than an option.

CONSTRUCTION

On opening the substantial nylon storage bag we were presented with a harness which conforms to european standards EN 813 (personal protective equipment for prevention of

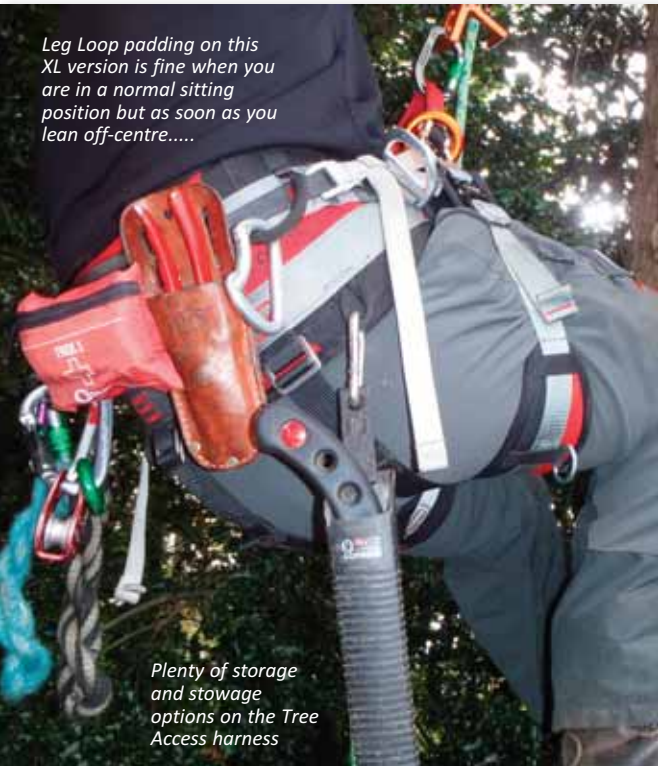
CAMP Tree Access

by Ade Scott
& Adam Jones



falls from a height) and EN358 (belts for work positioning and restraint and work positioning lanyards). We also had the Access Chest harness which when fitted takes the harness to EN 361 (Personal protective equipment against falls from a height - Full body harnesses). In all its shiny glory we elected to use only the sit harness without the chest rig for this review as this put it on a level playing field with most comparable products and US models in particular. Designed for the larger wearer, our particular harness was sized for L to XXL, the other version is S to L. But as we shall see CAMP may have miscalculated the requirements for leg loop padding on a larger leg. It was, however, immediately apparent that the harness could be adjusted through a wide range to fit most users (>75kg/165 lb). The adjustable leg loop webbing is

connected via the ‘Speedy Alu’ automatic buckles with easy pull-through webbing for size adjust - this is a good set up because it’s quick to don and easy to adjust. However, having used this style of buckle for many years we can advise that you need to keep those two push buttons clean and free-moving or they can get very stiff. The triple layer, double density belt padding provides a high degree of comfort. The inside face of these pads is dressed with a 3D mesh to offer better ventilation and wicking properties. The wide contact areas for both the belt and the leg loops suggested that this was going to be a comfortable harness to wear aloft but we have used some wide belts that were too stiff and dug in so comfort wasn’t a foregone conclusion. The metal work is predominantly aluminium, with the bridge rings being stainless steel, these com-



5mm Allen-bolt secured shackle for field replacement of the double thickness bridge strap



Spot the fishing line used during photography?



LEFT: The optional Access Chest creates a full body harness in seconds to make inverts like the one shown left far more comfortable. It has the added bonus of adhering to a higher (some would suggest minimum) safety standard. It's a very simple matter to preconnect the chest section to the rear buckle and store it in a pouch until you want it. It then simply goes over the head and clips to the front soft eye with the captive eye carabiner supplied.

LEFT: A right-to-left rotation with partial invert. Sounds like an ice-skating routine but is the kind of manoeuvring we do in tree work using the bridge that isn't so comfortable or even possible in central attachment hardpoint harnesses. A downside to the Tree Access was that the padding didn't go far enough round larger thighs to protect it from thinner webbing cutting in.

ponents together with robust stitching, hold together the well made and apparently robust material components of the complete set-up. At this stage you may notice the small label sourcing manufacture to China, don't let your preconceptions lead you astray, this is a well made piece of equipment meeting all the current standards required to attain the grade.

Having put the harness on, we were taken by the apparent low position of the webbing bridge which runs from leg loop to leg loop instead of the expected higher position more in line with the waist belt. Once in suspension we swung to a horizontal near inverted position and realised that reference needed to be made to the user manual, as this surely couldn't be the intended orientation for the wearer. It became clear that adjustment of the bridge position using the variable side webbing and buckles was necessary to personalise the fit (men....

resist the natural urge to dispense with instructions and instead take a quick look). With that sorted it was onwards and upwards, literally. This harness was passed around six different climbers of varying stature and with differing styles of climbing, from DDRT to SRT. With the ergonomics of contoured webbing and padding the harness allowed each wearer to move freely into the broad range of positions required to achieve access to all parts of the canopy. Of particular note was the highly adjustable positioning of the bridge. It allowed the wearer to vary their centre of gravity easily. We wonder whether this innovative means of adjusting the suspension position was by design or an accidental consequence of adapting an access harness to create a tree harness but either way it works well. This feature is relatively unique in that the simple buckle adjustment can be used while the harness is in use, albeit when load is temporarily taken off the bridge. Throughout

use the harness remained a pleasure to wear with the one exception being the load on the lower leg loop when the climber rotated fully to one side. In this orientation the padding on the lower leg loop gets dragged to the front because it's stitched at the bridge union and leaves the bottom of the thigh supported only by the 40mm webbing. This isn't the first time we've seen this on a rope access harness and was the only compromise we found that was a consequence of altering an existing design to make it fit the arborist market. Perhaps the padding on the larger model needs to remain floating so that it stays in place during extreme manoeuvres but there certainly needs to be more of it. That's one of the perils of universal or wide-ranging sizing. Spiking using a pole strap on the side D-rings was both functional and comfortable. The broad back support and padding successfully spreads the lateral loading and unlike the leg loops extended far enough round the sides to cover

the D-rings which would otherwise dig in uncomfortably.

Gear carriage is something that all climbers refine over time. The equipment carried is governed not only by the job in hand but also climbing styles and techniques. The Tree Access has the now familiar line of webbing loops situated high on the waist band (see title picture), three on the rear plus a loop mid-way down the rear padding and one on each of the rear quarters at waist belt level. Several smaller webbing eyes in between the main gear loops provide for customised cord loops or accessory carabiners like CAMP's own Hub. Two smaller loops are found either side low on the waist belt and even the leg loops have a pair of metal gear rings. All are rated for to 10kg load.

This is a company with several decades of harness-making experience so safety would never be in doubt. The Tree Access harness met with a critical and demanding group and performed well. Despite initial resistance, users found it easy to adjust to best suit their statures, they felt comfortable with the materials and construction and felt confident when working in the canopy. There was a little discomfort when the leg loops were loaded at maximum rotation but otherwise the wide padding seemed to do well, especially around the waist when using the side 'D's. The plentiful gear loops meant that the need to improvise additional attachments didn't crop up for any of us.

Harnesses are very personal and you will all have opinions as to what you want, need or would like, the Tree Access won't please you all but will definitely satisfy many. The reviewers have an average of 12yrs experience each as climbers and all thought it would be a harness they'd be happy with on a day-to-day basis so I guess we're happy CAMPers.....I'll get my coat.