

E IS FOR EFFORTLESS!

E-bikes are more affordable than ever and there are now loads of leg-saving two-wheeled wonders on the market. But which should you choose?

Electric bikes have undergone a huge rise in popularity over recent years, meaning you can now choose from an utterly bewildering range of makes and models.

The rise of e-bikes has taken place over the last 15 years or so, with a growing number of models launched, many of which are great bikes.

We have concentrated on two factors, opting for a range of e-bikes that combine good value, great riding fun, practicality and the best examples of well-thought-out design. All put the e-bike smile on your face!

SO HOW DO E-BIKES WORK?

If you haven't tried e-bikes before the idea is simple: by adding a small motor and battery system to a bicycle you get a bike that will let many cyclists go further, or faster, and carry more with them than they would otherwise.

You still pedal and the motor system gives you a boost so you feel like you have bionic legs (or you can turn the power level down if you want more exercise).

They are treated just like a regular bike, so there's no need for insurance or road tax. But we do advise you wear a helmet (though it's not compulsory like it is with a motorbike). Best of all they add an extra dimension of adventure to your motorhome trips.

WHAT SHOULD YOU PAY?

The bikes here represent just about the whole gamut of prices. Budget bikes can offer tonnes of fun and can be superb value for money, but need to be chosen with care. Basic bikes from

Halfords (like the one featured here) and Decathlon (take a look at the £649 B'TWIN Elops) are great examples of well-designed, relatively low-priced e-bikes, but it's also the fact that the companies themselves are likely to be around for a good many years to provide advice and back-up if needed.

There are likely to be some compromises, too, with the performance of lower-priced bikes including less-powerful motors (often hub motors found in the front or rear wheel), smaller batteries (with less range) and a lower spec of many of the parts such as gears and brakes. This doesn't mean these bikes can't be great fun and provide you with all you need in an e-bike, especially if you only need a bike for shorter, gentler rides.

With an increase in price comes more powerful motors from the likes of Bosch, Brose, Shimano and Yamaha, found on very many of today's e-bikes. While you can't go far wrong with these motors, some manufacturers' designs, spec and pricing stand out more than others.

Mid-drives are motors attached around the pedal area of the bike and, because they act through the gearing, they tend to give more power over a greater range of speed. With these pricier bikes you normally get more sophisticated electronics that translate into smoother, more 'bike-like' power delivery, better handlebar displays and a general rise in quality in all aspects of the bike itself.

Note that most prices are for 2019 e-bikes – you may find similar 2018 models for less as retailers clear stock to make way for new models (*indicates online discounted price).



CARRERA CROSSCITY ELECTRIC

All the tech here has been around for quite a while – budget hub motor, fold in half frame, V-brakes – but it's a great package at this price and provides a speedy ride. The fold isn't as smooth and easy as some; you'll need bungees to hold it together. Note the weight of 19.4kg (removing the battery makes it lighter). The hub motor is quiet with a reasonably powerful assist but it's not the most efficient unit. The sleek in-frame battery usefully comes with a USB charge socket to charge up your gadgets.

FEATURES

- Quiet hub motor
- 2-year, 500 recharge warranty on battery
- Folded size approx 87cm x 41cm x 69cm

Contact: halfords.com



HAIBIKE SDURO HARDNINE 2.5 STREET

Haibike's SDURO range aims to blend some trail bike elements with mountain bike ones. This German company regularly earns plaudits for its off-road models. The relatively light Yamaha PW-X motor gives high performance and, thanks to the kit included, it's superb value. As well as mudguards and a kickstand, it's also got powerful LED lights. These bump the weight up to a rather portly 24.5kg and it's not supplied with a pannier rack.

FEATURES

- Relatively light Yamaha PW-X motor
- Superb value for the performance it gives
- Weighs 24.5kg

Contact: haibike.com



HELIOS STEPS TANDEM

If you want to share the cycling load a tandem might be for you. Designed and built in the UK, the Helios weighs from 16kg. It is considerably lighter and less bulky than two solo bikes. With the separable option, it can even be packed into a suitcase. It's capable of fitting a wide range of rider sizes, including young children in the rear position. The e-bike version is fitted with the fully integrated Shimano STEPS system, although if you could do without this, prices start from £1,599 for the standard Helios.

FEATURES

- Can be customised with cargo racks, panniers or child seats and more
- Weighs less than two bikes

Contact: circecycles.com



RIESE & MÜLLER NEVO GX

If you are looking for versatile design and have deep pockets, Riese & Müller's practical city bike with some off-road ability is well worth a test ride. Riese & Müller is one of the highest-quality e-bike brands out there. This is evident from the strong frame to the most powerful Bosch motor available and the unique pannier rack. It comes with lights, mudguards, quality air-sprung front suspension and off-road knobby tyres. It's effectively two bikes in one: ride in extreme comfort on or off road.

FEATURES

- Immensely strong, low step-through frame
- Uses most powerful Bosch motor available
- Hi-tech electronically shifting hub gears

Contact: r-m.de/en-gb/



RALEIGH MOTUS GRAND TOUR

A leisure style e-bike that is fast and pretty powerful up the hills and has front suspension, so it's great for roads and easy trails such as railpaths. There is a step-thru version as well as a crossbar one. It uses the latest Bosch Active Line Plus motor, which is very quiet; the 'Plus' shows it has more power than the basic model. Economical, it can achieve good range. It's also very well equipped. The frame-mounted battery keeps the weight low while the swept-back handlebars aid comfort.

FEATURES

- Uses Bosch Active Line Plus motor
- Weighs 24.5kg
- Frame-mounted battery

Contact: raleigh.co.uk



CUBE ACID HYBRID ONE 400 29

A hardtail e-MTB (mountain bike), this lightweight, agile machine uses the Bosch Active Line Plus motor and offers great value for money. Compared with many e-MTBs it also offers a more upright riding position than most other models, which gives greater comfort and makes for safer handling. Options include 400 and 500Wh batteries, a lower diagonal top tube for easier mounting and demounting, plus mudguard mounting points if you want to retrofit them.

FEATURES

- Bosch Active Line Plus motor
- Options include 400 and 500Wh batteries
- More upright riding position than most

Contact: cube.eu/uk



BESV PS1

At 17.5kg fully loaded with lights, luggage rack and mudguards, the PS1 is light. It's a carbon fibre bike, with proper dual suspension: sprung forks up front and a shock absorber behind. The PS1 boasts a quiet but powerful 250W motor, which responds to pedalling via a torque sensor. There's an easy-to-read digital display, which shows your speed, distance and battery level. Note that this price is only valid until the end of February (the price goes back up to £2,995 in March).

FEATURES

- Carbon fibre frame means lower weight
- App connects to bike via Bluetooth
- Torque sensor detects pedalling

Contact: 50cycles.com/besv-ps1



CYTRONEX CANNONDALE QUICK 6

Cytronex is a brilliant UK firm that engineers and (largely) makes its own retrofit system based around a very quiet, lightweight front hub motor. It also sells a range of off-the-peg e-bikes fitted with this system. The lightweight design includes an efficient bottle battery and sensor for smooth power once you start pedalling. As a retrofit system you could also fit it to your own bike. It's also very lightweight, weighing just 16.3kg. We don't know of any other e-bike at this weight for such a relatively low price.

FEATURES

- Unique bottle battery (easily removed)
- Very lightweight – weighs 16.3kg
- Small and efficient 180Wh battery

Contact: cytronex.com