Buying Electric Bikes

Buying

When you are comparing traditional cycles it is quite easy to read the specification and look at the bikes to see what they can do. However, when it comes to electric bikes the differences cannot be seen, they are electronic or contained in a format you cannot easily compare.

It is understandable if you are confused by conflicting sources of information. It takes years to truly understand all the components and the resultant cycling experience. Yet enthusiasts with little knowledge are keen to tell the world what they know.

The performance of an electric bike is not all about the latest battery technology (an over simplification) it's a combination of all the parts; the frame, the motor, the battery pack, the controller, the cables, the connectors used, quality grade of all materials, efficiency of the system and attention to detail at the factory.

Just as motorcycles or cars that look the same can give very different driving experiences so can electric bikes. It is so important to test ride or get honest, knowledgeable advice.

You might be surprised by how the power integrates with your riding style. When the power comes in; when it cuts out and the motor kicks in, in a way that the manufacturer has thought about the practicalities of their design and programmed the control unit accordingly.

Weight
The weight of an electric bike is essential to its performance, there are also legal limits for weight (see Rules & Regulations). Manufacturers have been busy reducing the weight of these parts, and if life was ever straight forward then the lighter the better, however, life not being so easy, there are of course swings and roundabouts. Did you expect it any other way?

Frame: Lightweight frames are always good, unless you plan to do serious off-roading where a lighter frame sometimes sacrifices flexibility and strength.
   - 6061 Alloy – good for medium off road use and city use
   - 7005 alloy – good for road bikes and city use
   - steel – good for heavy use

Battery: Lightweight batteries are really coming along and in the more expensive bikes will usually provide power equivalent to the uncompromising heavy batteries. Beware though as some models do sacrifice power in order to reduce weight. I explain more about batteries in a dedicated section.