

Airmimal

Price: £1,300
Weight: 15.5kg
Rating: ●●●●

EASILY the cleverest here – and arguably the best looking – the Airmimal is a superbike in the folding cycle world. However, it's got a massive price and is aimed more at the serious rider looking to take two wheels on holiday. It came packed in a suitcase, but even this is a £100 option. Taking 11 minutes to build and six minutes to collapse, it was the slowest bike to make it on to the road. Narrow tyres let the handling down, while the brakes and 18-ratio shifts weren't as good as rivals'.



Bike-in-a-bag

Price: £175
Weight: 11.8kg
Rating: ●●

SIMPLE, basic and cheap sum up this two-wheeler. Although it failed to excel in any aspect apart from its easy-to-use locking system, the Bike-in-a-bag was perfect for commuting on a budget. It unfolded quickly and featured a compass, bell, side stand and, as the name suggested, a carrying bag. However, with no gears, basic cantilever brakes and small wheels, it wasn't much cop on the test route, where it was both uncomfortable and difficult to ride.



Philips Boardwalk

Price: £319
Weight: 12.5kg
Rating: ●●●●

OUR test route proved tiring on the Philips as the brake levers were in an unusual place and we found the riding position awkward. The gears were adequate and had a gripshift, but could have been better spaced. We liked the stopping power of the V-brakes, plus the rack, bungees and side stand extras. A complex construction was disappointing, but collapsing was easier, taking only 35 seconds. However, the tyres slipped on corners, which let the handling down.



Giant Halfway

Price: £475
Weight: 11.9kg
Rating: ●●●●●

IN the previous folding bikes test (Issue 697) this took our 'premium' top spot, but here it was beaten by the Vitesse (opposite). It took only 45 seconds to put up, but two minutes to fold down. However, it was comfortable, and its gripshift ratios were well spaced. A great stand, rack and locking system all helped make the Giant a deserved Recommended buy.



Dahon Presto P3

Price: £349.99
Weight: 10.3kg
Rating: ●●●●●

PACKED with features, this is another good offering from Dahon (see opposite and Also Tested). The P3 was both ready to ride and packed away in a remarkable 20 seconds. It had a stand, bell and rack with metal clips to secure a case, while its seating was comfortable. However, the gripshift gears were vague – they came loose on our test – while the short handlebars made cornering quite difficult.



Brompton T6

Price: £626
Weight: 12.3kg
Rating: ●●●●

NEARLY identical to the L3 (opposite) but with more kit including three extra gears, rack and dynamo-powered lights. The brilliant collapsing mechanism made it one of the best folders, although this did compromise the riding experience. Small wheels and narrow bars took some getting used to and, despite the extra ratios, the lever gearchange was still poor. A former champ, but the design has been bettered by rivals, and its price is increasingly hard to justify.



Also tested

Handybike

Price: £229 Weight: 10kg
Rating: ●

Dahon Matrix

Price: £449.99 Weight: 13.2kg
Rating: ●○

Dahon Speed 6

Price: £229.99 Weight: 12.5kg
Rating: ●●●●●

Dahon Piccolo 16-inch

Price: £299.99 Weight: 12.1kg
Rating: ●○○○

The test



AS these bikes will mainly live folded up in the boot, the time it took to get them ready to be ridden was paramount. We also wanted the cycles to be comfortable on our test route, while the number of gears, handling and light weight were also important.

Extra features such as a stand or bell were noted, and we preferred gripshift gears to levers, and the better V-brakes to the usual cantilevers.

Verdict

THE winner easily outshone its rivals. New to the market, the Vitesse was outstanding at folding and unfolding, and was good to ride, too. It was also light and small. The Giant was simple to set up and comfortable, while the Birdy Red had excellent suspension.

Folding bikes

- 1st Dahon Vitesse
- 2nd Giant Halfway
- 3rd Birdy Red