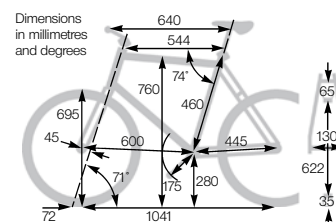




BIONICON URBAN ROAD



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Price: £559 (varies with Sterling-Euro exchange rate)

Weight: 9.95kg (without pedals)

Sizes: S, M (tested), L, XL

Frame and Fork: Chrome-moly steel. Rack & mudguard bosses front and rear. Two sets of bottle bosses. Allen key seat clamp.

Wheels: Alex Race 28 Rims, 32 stainless p/g spokes, Shimano Alivio QR hubs, Schwalbe Kojak 700x35C tyres.

Transmission: Shimano Tiagra 9-speed rear derailleur, Microshift bar-end shift lever, 11-34 cassette listed but 11-28 fitted. SR Suntour single ring 42 tooth crankset with chainring guard, square taper BB, SRAM chain. 9-speed, 41-104 inches

Braking: Shimano V-brakes with Tektro levers

Steering and Seating: Bionicon 'Time Trial' handlebar, Bionicon stem and seatpost (27.2mm), 1.125in Aheadset, Selle Italia XO saddle

Accessories: none

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COMMUTER BIKE

Bionicon Urban Road

Cycling journalist **Steve Worland** reviews an unusual-looking but practical and adaptable urban hybrid

GERMAN MANUFACTURER
Bionicon is better known for its unique full suspension mountain bikes, but many German bike brands have a stab at creating the ideal urban/suburban bike, just as many British bike brands have a go at designing folding bikes.

Despite its slightly mish-mash looks, the Bionicon is a fast, lively and very pleasing ride. It's also adaptable, with space for touring or trail tyres plus eyelets for racks and mudguards. (Toe clearance will be tight at best if you do fit a front mudguard but unless you



1 The single Microshift bar-end lever works a Tiagra 9-speed derailleur

2 Room for guards between the 35mm tyres the V-brakes

have unusually large feet, you won't get any overlap with the tyre.)

There are cable guides for a front mech if you feel that a 42-tooth single ring doesn't offer enough gears. A single ring is generally fine for city use but the Urban Road has an 11-28 cassette, matched with a Shimano Tiagra road derailleur. I'd have preferred an 11-34 cassette and a mountain bike derailleur for climbing Bristol's hills.

There'll be plenty riders who won't change a thing. Cyclists looking for pure speed might like the contentious choice of cowhorn handlebars, which come with the brake levers and a prone bar-end shifter on the forward reach section. Others may feel that they're too one-positional for easy braking and shifting on casual rides.

Comfortably quick

On our test bike, the stem was a high rise version of the one specified. But stems are a personal choice and easy to swap at the point of purchase. The heart of the bike, the frameset, is a breath of fresh air. In a world full of harsh aluminium frames on mid-priced bikes, a skinny tubed chrome-moly frame is a reminder that steel can offer

a slightly more comfortable ride, a point that matters if you like riding fast tyres on rough roads.

Many hybrids around this price seek extra comfort through cheap suspension and/or much fatter tyres, sometimes on 26in mountain bike wheels, and simply end up feeling cumbersome. The Bionicon uses 700C wheels and slick 35mm tyres. Combined with its 10kg weight and a geometry configuration that manages to feel both lively and confident, this dictates easy speed and the sort of sprightly ride that's not easy to find on mainstream hybrids at this price.

Also consider



1) ISLABIKES BEINN 29
£399.99

Islabikes' adult bike is as adaptable as the Bionicon, about 3lb heavier but £160 cheaper with an aluminium frame and flat bar. islabikes.co.uk



2) TREK 7.5 FX £650

Trek 'Fitness' bikes are essentially flat bar road bikes with a wide gear range, unhindered by superfluous suspension. The mid-range 7.5 is good value. trekbikes.com