# Volt Urban LS electric bike review

by mark sutton

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IN HYBRID, COMMUTER AND FOLDING BIKES
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**RATING:** 4.3

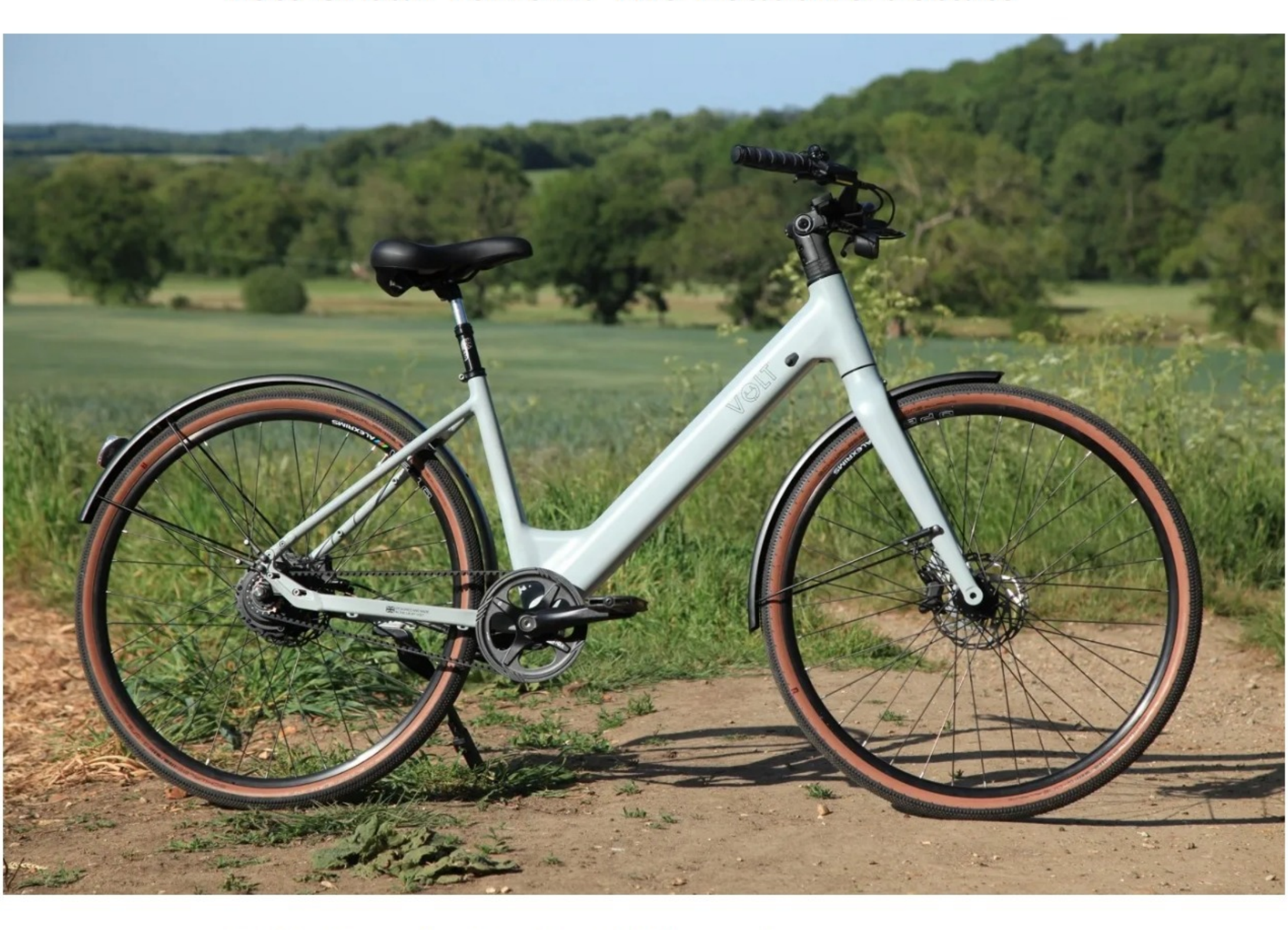
**PRICE:** £2,399

It's the Volt Urban by name, but this review revealed an electric bike that is perhaps sub-urban by nature. I'm a big fan of urban bikes that are not strictly so and that enable you to meet the weekday commute head-on, but still offer leisure appeal and the ability to take a scenic canal path route on a whim if the sun shines. This latest instalment to the UK e-bike assembler's portfolio meets that brief well and does so at an eye-catching price, especially considering this is a brand with local backup and a smattering of brand-name components across all of its builds too.

Commuter facing electric bikes have been reviewed in droves here on Cycling Electric, so if you're shopping for something just like the Volt Urban and wish to review a number of options before you buy, the following three guides can steer your decisions well:

- The best electric commuter bikes – transport solutions reviewed and rated
- The best commuter e-bikes under £2,000
- Electric bikes with a step through frame

## Volt Urban review: The headline details



**£2,399 (Currently £2,099) – Voltbikes.co.uk**

**Pros**
Excellent value
Very comfortable (good saddle and suspension seatpost)
Versatile
Clean aesthetic
Automatic gearing is seamless
UK assembly and backup (+ over 100 bike shop stockists)
Comes in low-step or traditional frame

**Cons**
Launch offer soon to end (worth £300)
Pannier rack is extra
Frame lacks mounts, or range extender options
Pedals are slippery in the wet
Quad Lock say this phone mount not intended for use on a bike!

**Stated weight:** 19.5kg
**Stated range:** Up to 60km (fair use tested), 90km claimed (eco use)
**Frame material:** Aluminium
**Motor:** Bafang three-speed automatic gearhub
**Battery:** 360Wh Panasonic
**Drivetrain:** Bafang three-speed automatic gearhub
**Brakes:** Tektro hydraulic brakes with electronic motor cutoff
**Saddle:** Wide comfort with carry handle
**Tyres:** Schwalbe G-One 1.5" wide
**Suspension:** None
**Included accessories:** Quad Lock phone mount, SKS metal mudguards, adjustable kickstand, wired-in lights, EXA suspension seatpost

DESIGNED AND MADE
IN THE UK BY VOLT

## Volt Urban LS review: Who is this e-bike aimed at?

This is an electric bike that straddles the leisure, commuting, step-through frame and, at a small push, gravel category too. Versatility is its strong point, even though it is marketed as an urban bike. 1.5" wide Schwalbe G-One tyres and a pretty decent EXA suspension seatpost make all the difference when it comes to taking the scenic route, and while I'd not go out on an all-day gravel adventure on this bike, it's great for taking in canal paths and dry countryside shortcuts. In the wet, you're limited by the sandpaper grip pedals more than anything else, which is a pet hate of mine and the first thing I'd upgrade on any bike carrying them.

This is an electric bike that comes relatively well equipped, but that misses three key accessory features that could really improve its functionality – namely a rear wheel lock, bottle cage mounts and a pannier rack fitted as standard. You can tack on the former and the latter as an aftermarket add ons, of course. These commuter-centric omissions, to my tastes, already make the bike less 'Urban' and more leisure. Electric bikes like Volt's Regent arguably do more off the shelf for the commuter, though it is £400 more expensive.

Now this is an e-bike with some very close competitors and operating in a very competitive price point. So categorisation aside, the value that is brought to the table has to be really strong to stand out, and we'll make closer comparisons in Cycling Electric's next print magazine.

## Competition runs hot in this price bracket

I have been riding the Volt Urban side-by-side with new generation Estarli e28.x, which has been an excellent opportunity to benchmark one bike against the other, picking out elements from both that bring a smile and some that don't.

A first and most obvious difference was that the larger front chainring on the Volt Urban was immediately preferable to the smaller option fitted to the Estarli, however, this is a custom build element from the fellow UK assembler, so it's not a criticism, just a note to anyone buying that the Automatic three-speed Bafang gearhub and motor, to my taste, aligns far better to a more progressive and larger front chainring. Luckily, on the Volt, it's the only option and, for me, it just works more seamlessly with the automatic gearing and my pedal cadence.

The comparisons are going to run throughout this Volt Urban review, but truth be told, these two British firms have a lot in common to benefit the customer and I'm a big fan of brands that have boots on the ground and backup based locally. This matters from an aftersales perspective and in Volt's case, they have over 100 bike shops stocking their electric bikes, meaning you'll have plenty of chance to see a bike before you buy. In fact, you can try one at *Cycling Electric's Demo Day's in Leeds this weekend, plus at Herne Hill in July* too.

One key comparison that I've been looking at is the spec sheets, both standard and upgradable. In Volt's case, it's more of a what you see is what you get approach, with the website not being overly focused on upgrades or add-ons, while Estarli's method is instead based on a typically slightly lower base price for the undressed e-bike, with a price that rises when you make key upgrades like suspension forks, or add key accessories. Both approaches have their merits and Volt's is perhaps easier if you are not yet an expert on all things cycling. For now, at least, Volt doesn't seem to have much of an accessories catalogue and instead relies on third-party accessories to bolster its bike's capabilities.

## Volt Urban review: How does it ride?

Most bikes that have opted for a swept-back handlebar and the Bafang three-speed automatic motor and gearhub combination have brought a smile to my face, but previously I've ridden far too many of those local A to B journeys that replace my car trips. With the Volt Urban, I wanted to see to what degree I could push the bike's limits, which are theoretically capped mostly by the rigid fork and the tyre choice.

With this in mind, I headed out into the countryside, riding undulating narrow lanes and public bridleways connecting routes. Here I found limits on the Bafang three-speed motor that I hadn't previously encountered on hills above a 5% gradient. That's not particularly shocking for a rear hub motor, and with the appropriate pedal pressure, it climbs just fine, but it's something to be aware of, simply because you only have the three gears that automatically adjust to your situation. Outside of that, you're on your own once the motor begins to reach its limits. All that being said, this is technically 'off-brief' riding, unless your town or city has regular steeper inclines. Most in the south east of England don't.

As for the gearing element of the Bafang Automatic hub motor, this is as good as flawless and is an expert at aiding acceleration, especially when you're riding in stop-start city traffic. It does a pretty good job sensing your pedal pressure moment to moment and didn't stress me out too much when climbing, striking a good balance between progress on hills and momentum carried. Paired to a low-maintenance Michelin belt drive, you have a clean, absolutely silent and strong drivetrain that should last a lot longer on grimy roads than a chain.

51%
S
0.0 mph
Trip
15.2 mi
QUAD LOCK

In taking this Volt Urban review outside of its stated comfort zone, I was achieving around one hour's riding per quarter of the 360Wh battery, whilst actively toggling the motor's assist settings up and down to preserve battery when help wasn't required. On the flats, this bike glides up to speed quickly and settles at a good pace on account of the momentum carried by the autoshifting. Volt claims that you could get 90km of assisted riding when ridden solely on eco mode, and my experience leaves no reason to doubt that's possible, but 60km is probably more realistic.

As alluded to, the riding posture is one of the most enjoyable things about a bike like this because it promotes a straight back and a relaxed riding position that won't see you fatigue before time. This is vastly improved by Volt's finishing kit, most notably the saddle, which is a top marks product on account of how comfortable it was (for me, at least) and the fact that it has a carry handle moulded into the base, making this a really simple bike to move when static.

Beneath the saddle is another feature that makes a surprising amount of difference, which is the EXA suspension seatpost, which is a standard feature. Now I did prefer Estarli's option here, the Redshift suspension seatpost, however, this was one of those examples of an upgrade that cost £245 on top of the base price, whereas Volt's is included, though the base bike price is higher. If money were no object, I'd plump for the Redshift system as optional with the Estarli, but Volt's EXA seatpost is also very good and really absorbs gravel path vibrations well.

Up front, an angle-adjustable stem is now a common feature on bikes like this, but it's very welcome, because a quick adjustment here can give you a more upright, or a more progressive riding position in seconds.

You might notice on the cockpit that there's a phone mount from Quad Lock, which I'm always in two minds about, but it's no different to the comparable Estarli, which has an SP Connect mount instead. These fixed ecosystem add-ons always feel like they should be an optional extra, and shouldn't come before items like a pannier rack, especially when there are also no head tube mounts for a basket attachment. In the case of this phone mount, it's a stick-on solution that's semi-permanent, although I hope permanent enough that it will stay put when I mount a grand's worth of phone to it. ***Editor's Note:*** Quad Lock has come back to me and revealed that the mount pictured here is actually a Wall Mount and not intended for use on a bike. That's quite a big oversight from Volt, given that these mounts are hosting our expensive mobiles.

Unfortunately, my experience with stick-on Quad Lock universal mounts is terrible, and I'm an Android user, so I would be required to have a stick-on universal patch on my phone case as well as on the bike. This is too risky for me. Still, if you have an iPhone and don't mind locking into the Quad Lock accessories ecosystem, then I'm sure you'll be pleased. Alternatively, just browse third-party mobile phone mounts.

In terms of other accessories, the metal SKS mudguards are of a high quality, and I tested those in a downpour, remaining pretty dry. The kickstand is quickly length-adjustable too, which is welcome. The brakes are above and beyond the standard issue, with dual cables coming from the levers, one supplying the hydraulic pistons, the other alerting the motor of braking and stopping it from trying to power through under braking.

## Final thoughts

Make no mistakes, for all the minor things I've picked out that I'm not a fan of, these were outweighed heavily by what I do like about this electric bike. My time with the Volt Urban went above and beyond its brief and it was a joy to ride, which is the only thing that matters. I would regularly pick this bike out of a lineup to ride it for my regular trips to and from town, so it meets the short journey car replacement brief well enough. I just wish it had better cargo carriage options.

In terms of performance, it rode exceptionally well, felt well built, was among the most comfortable bikes of this style I've ridden for a while and the price is absolutely fair. It's at this point I have my sticking point. If you act fast, you can get this bike at a pre-order price that's £300 cheaper than the price once stock lands en masse. For this price, this bike would edge the Estarli E28.x that I've compared it to, but at its full retail, it's a toss-up, because I could buy the base Estarli and make a handful of bespoke tweaks to the spec sheet to have it suit my personal needs, inclusive of a suspension fork and a pannier rack. The odds are that, actually, I'd make it more expensive in the end, but not by much.

It's really hard to choose between these two e-bikes, but what I will say is that I've not yet had a bad experience when testing Volt's e-bikes and I continue to be very pleased with the brand's offering. A three-year warranty is another perk worth consideration.

All-in-all, I'd be very happy to recommend the Volt Urban to anyone shopping this brief, but more than that, I'd recommend a review of your own at our up-coming Demo Day experiences.

**Tags:** Volt

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Mark has been writing within the bike industry for two decades, both on the business to business side and consumer-facing too. Mark is the Founding Editor of CyclingElectric. He rides anything and everything on two wheels and will do a wheelie if you ask him to.

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