

Words: Dan Taylor Photography: Jonny Ashelford



BOXER E-SHUTTLE

{ £2,880 }

If you're really keen to minimise your use of a car, or even to do away with it completely, then it's unlikely that a rear rack and pannier set is going to cut it, especially on a school run. That's where the Boxer Shuttle comes in, a bike that can seat four children safely and carry enough shopping to feed them for a fortnight.

This is the E-Shuttle, which has a 250W motor; the pedal-power-only Shuttle costs from £1,950 but given that it weighs over 50kg we suggest you only consider it if you live in a very flat area and you're built like a gorilla. This demo bike has a few options: a £450 set of lights (from a Land Rover!), and a £120 front-mount rack for kids' bikes. A waterproof cover for the box is included.

I received a lot of attention while testing the Boxer. Kids and parents at school enthused about it. Road workers eyed it with curious amusement, and urban traffic seemed surprised as I easily kept pace. It's a 'tadpole' trike design: it looks just like a normal bike at the back but with a box and two widely spaced wheels at the front. The front box can take a load of up to 120kg and it has twin 12V LED headlights, taillights and indicators. There's an electric horn and a pedestrian friendly bell, too. The 250W e-drive has a potential range of over 50 miles (depending on hills and cargo) which makes it a viable alternative to a second family car.

Even with four loud (seat belted) children aboard, the Shuttle feels stable. The brakes are more than capable and the upright riding position provides great visibility. The electric assist only engages when the bike is moving, so with a heavy load you need to be mindful of shifting down the gears before you stop - the weight means it takes a bit of effort to get it going. The 7-speed cassette has a huge 34t sprocket and, with the motor, it's enough to get up even quite steep hills.

Riding a trike takes some getting used to but the handling soon becomes second nature. You need to lean your weight into the corner or you risk lifting the inside wheel and tipping. I found it quite an effort to hold a straight line on a steeply cambered road, so I tended to hold a more central position in the road or find a different route. The turning circle is much greater than a traditional bike, though if you get stuck in a narrow road it's easy to lift the back wheel around.

The Shuttle is extremely practical, and also top fun to ride and experience with kids. Designed and manufactured entirely in Dorset, UK, Boxer have been developing cargo bikes since 2008. Boxer recognise the need for versatility, so the front of the box can be fitted with a carrier for kids' bikes or a pushchair. The bench seats in the box double as lockable storage and can be removed or repositioned depending as needed. There's an 'elderly dog ramp' option, or you can specify your own custom modification. Choose between eight frame colours and 12 wraps on the box, or design your own. And if the Shuttle is a bit too sensible for you, check out the Saturn on p27 of this issue.

{ 8 } **Fun and practical, UK built, thoughtful design and options**

Frame Aluminium / **Wheels** Heavy-duty aluminium rims / **Transmission** 250W/14.5Ah electric drive, 7-speed derailleur with 34t crawler gear / **Brakes** Triple Tektro hydraulic disc brakes, 180/160mm rotors www.boxercycles.com

