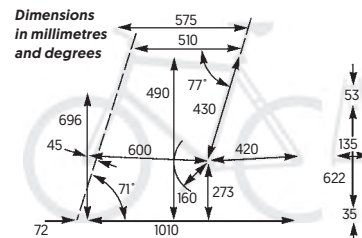


Photos: Dan Joyce



**Biketest**



**Tech spec**  
**ISLABIKES LUATH**

- Price:** £899.99
- Sizes:** XS, S (tested), M.
- Weight:** 9.68kg/21.3lb (no pedals).
- Frame & fork:** 6061 aluminium frame with 68mm threaded BB, 1 1/8in head tube, 135mm QR dropouts and fittings for rear rack, mudguard, and two bottles. Islabikes full-carbon fork with 100mm QR dropout and fittings for mudguard and two bottle/cargo cages.
- Wheels:** 35-622 Islabikes/Vee Tire Mixte tyres, Islabikes 'Easy Tyre Change' disc rims, 28x2 stainless steel spokes, aluminium QR disc hubs.
- Transmission:** Resin flat pedals, 160mm Islabikes aluminium chainset with 36t narrow-wide direct mount chainring, 30mm external bearing BB, KMC X10 10-speed chain, Sunrace 11-40t 8-speed cassette.
- Shimano Claris 8-speed shifter and rear derailleur.** Eight ratios, 25-91in.
- Brakes:** Shimano Claris levers with custom short reach, Tektro MD-C510 flat-mount mechanical disc brakes with 160mm front and 140mm rear rotors.
- Steering & seating:** Ultraslim gel bar tape, 360x31.8mm Islabikes aluminium drops, 80mmx17° Islabikes aluminium stem, 1 1/8in integrated headset. Islabikes ergonomic saddle, 27.2x300mm aluminium inline seatpost, Allen-bolt seatpost clamp.

# Islabikes Luath

Like the children's bike of the same name, the Luath is scaled down to suit shorter riders. **Pip Munday** tested it

**T**he Luath is a drop-bar all-rounder aimed at adult cyclists that much of the industry pays only lip service to: those under the average male height of 5ft 9in. It fits riders as short as 4ft 11in. Small frames typically come with off-the-peg components that feel oversized. Not the Luath. As well as a scaled-down frame, it has custom short-reach brake levers, a narrower handlebar, and shorter cranks.



Above: Spacers in the levers bring them closer to the handlebar for smaller hands

The adaptation of components means that the bike feels in proportion. Frame geometry hasn't been compromised to fit in 700C wheels either. While the seat angle is steep, I was happy with the resulting shorter reach and liked the nimble handling – and the lack of toe overlap. Corners and descents were where I had most fun on it; on the flat it lacked the pep of more expensive gravel bikes that I've ridden. It's fine for an entry-level bike, however.

With decent tyre clearances and fittings for mudguards and a rear rack, it's a versatile bike. It's a decent gravel bike as it is but with accessories could be just as good for commuting, touring or bikepacking. Over the test period I used the Luath to get to and from the office, gym and shops, as

well as for some longer leisure rides on and off road.

With a 74cm inside leg, I'm borderline between the XS and S sizes according to the Islabikes website. I tried the XS first but couldn't get the saddle high enough. (Usually, I have the opposite issue and cannot put the saddle low enough!) So I ended up swapping it for a size S.

The test bike arrived with some gear indexing issues, causing skipped gears during my rides. (Setup issues aren't unique to bikes sold online but are less straightforward to remedy as you can't just pop back to the shop.) The 11-40t 8-speed Sunrace cassette has quite large gaps

between gears, and the shifting from the Shimano Claris shifter and derailleur is functional but fairly clunky compared to the higher-end groupsets I'm used to. I'd be looking to upgrade the cassette and derailleur at the first sign of wear in any case. The Luath is a bike that's worth upgrading. Oddly, although the 1x setup is controlled by just one lever, the bike came with shifters on both sides. ●

Other options

**SURLY STRAGGLER ▶**  
**1x 650B £2,149.99**

Chrome-moly gravel bike with SRAM Rival 1x11 drivetrain and TRP Spyre brakes that's available in a dinky 38cm size. Looking expensive these days.

[ison-distribution.com](http://ison-distribution.com)



**KONA ROVE AL 650 ▶**  
**£1,099**

The least expensive Rove is an all-aluminium bike with 2x8 Claris gearing, Tektro Mira CX mechanical discs and 47mm 650B tyres. Smallest size suits riders from 147cm (4ft 10in). [konaworld.com](http://konaworld.com)



**Verdict**

*The Islabikes Luath is a well thought-out entry-level bike that's comfortable and capable as a commuter, gravel bike or tourist. I enjoyed riding it on road and off and had only minor issues with the gearing. It's really refreshing to have a sensibly scaled-down small frame with components to match.*