



Bike test

Boardman URB 8.6

Journalist **Simon Withers** tests a simple, understated three-speed city runabout that costs £600

Boardman's URB 8.6 is as straightforward as it gets, from its simple three-speed hub gearing to its ultra understated looks. Talk about monochrome: the dark grey frameset, with its small reflective head badge and down tube logo (one side only), is accompanied by a black stem, bar and seatpost, and a lighter grey saddle and grips. You want some colour? Forget it!

But if you're looking for a minimalist commuter or day-to-day runabout with rack and mudguard fittings and decent comfort, this fulfils those criteria.

The Shimano Nexus hub gearing works well, and you can change gear while stationary or pedalling, but the range is limited by having just three ratios. The top gear is roughly equivalent to 50/17 (approx 80in), the middle 50/23 (59in) and the bottom 34/21 (43in).

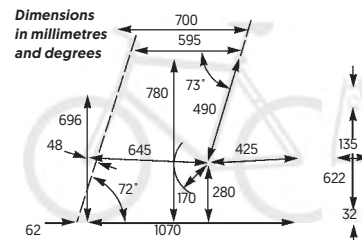


Top: The 3-speed hub gear is ideal for flatter towns and cities
Bottom: Hydraulic discs give powerful, all-weather braking

That bottom gear is fine for quite gentle inclines but when things get steeper – as on my local routes – the effort required, especially if you're carrying shopping, will be challenging. You'll also need a 15mm spanner for rear wheel punctures, unless you patch the tube in situ.

The braking is vastly better than you'll find on any £600 road bike. Tektro's hydraulic discs are powerful, controlled and have a very light action, and they were quiet once bedded in. Descents are tackled confidently and safely as a result

The 32mm tyres keep things comfortable, even with an aluminium frame and oversize aluminium seatpost. I particularly liked the grippy, canvas-covered URB saddle, which is less padded than many budget bikes' saddles – and all the better for it. The grips are made of the same material, though on a flat-bar bike I'd



Tech spec BOARDMAN URB 8.6

- Price:** £600.
- Sizes:** S, M (tested), L.
- Weight:** 10.5kg/23.1lb (without pedals).
- Frame & fork:** Boardman URB X7 aluminium frame with two pairs of bottle bosses, mudguard and rack mounts. Boardman URB alloy tapered fork with mudguard mounts.
- Wheels:** 32-622 Vittoria Zaffiro tyres, Boardman URB 6061 alloy rims, 32 15g spokes f&r, bolt-on Shimano SG-3D55 Nexus 3-speed rear hub, unbranded quick-release front hub.
- Transmission:** Alloy flat pedals, 170mm Prowheel alloy chainset with 39t chainring, 115mm VP sealed cartridge bottom bracket, KMC rust-resistant Z1 chain. Shimano Nexus SL-3S41E Revoshift shifter and 3-speed Nexus hub gear, 18t sprocket. Three ratios: 43-80in.
- Braking:** Tektro levers, Tektro HD-R310 hydraulic disc brakes, 160mm rotors.
- Steering & seating:** Boardman canvas grips, 600mm Boardman alloy bar and 90mm stem, 1 1/8-1.5in tapered headset. Boardman URB canvas saddle, 31.6x350mm alloy seatpost.
- Equipment:** None.

boardmanbikes.com

fit grips with bar ends such as Ergon's GP4 or GP5 for the extra handhold.

I attached a rear rack and loaded up the Boardman with some weighty loads. It coped well, with no flex from the frame. This bike would be ideal for shortish commutes and shopping journeys, and with mudguards fitted it would make a good year-round bike, too.

You could also use it for longer leisure rides on canal towpaths and the like – wherever it's reasonably flat. If you live in a hillier area, something like Boardman's HYB 8.6 would be a better bet. ●

Other options

MARIN FAIRFAX 2 ▶
£699

As well as Clarks hydraulic brakes, this all-aluminium hybrid from Marin comes with a 2x8-speed Shimano drivetrain (Altus, Acera, Tourney).

marinbikes.com



SPECIALIZED ▶
SIRRUS 2 £600

A lot of bike for your money, with the aluminium frame and steel fork decked out with 2x8-speed Microshift gearing and Promax hydraulic discs.

specialized.com



Verdict

Well-considered, everyday urban bike with excellent braking, good comfort and a more upright position that's ideal for commuting and utility cycling in traffic – although the gearing means it's not one for the hills. (Don't forget your Cycling UK discount at Halfords, by the way.)