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by cyclists**

ACTIVE

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Montague Boston £699

This was the first 700c single-speed folding bike on the market. OK, so this isn't a monumental 'first' like the first bike made from carbon-fibre or first bike with disc brakes — and I don't see a queue of bike-makers lining up to release rival machines — but listen a minute, and see why '700c' plus 'folding' divided by 'single-speed' might equal a big deal.

Being a folder, the mechanism is as important as almost anything else (apart from the ride, of course), and Montague has a patented system that folds the frame pretty much around on itself. Everything is controlled with quick-releases, and after a bit of practice it took me only 30 seconds in real-world situations. With full-sized wheels, and a folding system that only really halves the total length of the bike frame and rear wheel (the front wheel is removed, but more on that later), it doesn't create the smallest of packages to lug onto the bus.

In fact, being a folder, I was allowed to carry it on to the local tram that serves Croydon town without any worry of hassle from 'the man'. The people trying to commute to work on a Monday morning weren't too happy about the size of the bike, however. A regular bike with both wheels removed would fill a smaller volume of space.

Montague Boston £699
Frameset 7005 Aluminium with FIT folding system
Gears Singlespeed, 16T cog
Chainset SR Suntour 42T w/chainguard
Brakes Promax alloy
Wheels Alex rims, Formula hubs
Tyres Kenda Kwick Roller 28mm
Bar/Stem Riser style Alloy/Kalloy, 7-degree rise
Saddle Aero Performance
Seatpost 27.2x300mm Alloy
Size range 19in (model tested)/21in
Weight 10.8kg (23.8lb)
Contact www.montague-foldingbike.co.uk

As Montague states, though, "This isn't about origami, it's about folding your bike in a flash to catch a bus or train," and this is true. It is a quick fold, and for someone like me, who on occasion combines a commute with driving and cycling, popping the Boston into the boot of the car is a lot easier than removing both the wheels from a full-size bike.

Wheel hoopla

Before I talk about how great the ride quality is, I should return to the issue of that pesky front wheel. As mentioned earlier, you pop the front wheel out (with another clever quick-release system) before folding the Boston. But once folded, what do you do with the front wheel? I mean, it's massive: 700c, no less. Bundled with the bike is a strap

“For commutes on which the cycling part is the biggest chunk, it makes perfect sense”

to connect it to the frame, but in reality it's quicker to carry the bike in one hand and the wheel in another.

So, I reiterate: this bike isn't about origami. Bags are available to buy (£99), which are ideal for carrying your bike in a car, and you'll fit two in a large saloon-style boot (according to Montague). But for shorter journeys, strap the front wheel on and jump on the train.

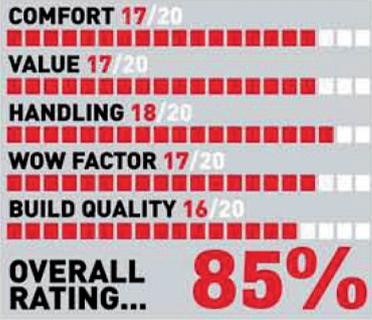
Unfold and forget

OK, the ride. The only reason you'd put up with a large folder on the train/bus/car is so that when you arrive at the other end, the ride is much better than it would be on a tiny-wheeled folder. And here we're on to a winner.

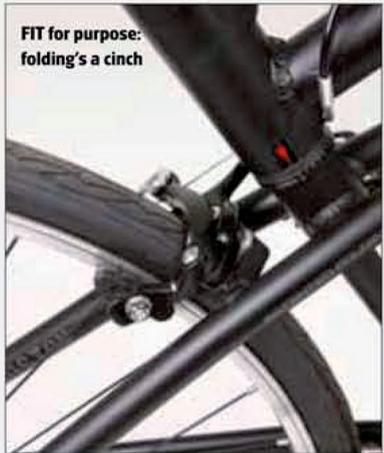
Firstly, it's a single-speed. That means no maintenance and less chance of annoying mechanical trouble. Then there's the chunky 28mm tyres, which roll well, have a decent level of grip and haven't punctured once. Attached to the wheels is an alloy frame that, unless you catch sight of yourself reflected in the side of a fancy new glass-fronted building, you might forget is a folder at all.

When out for rides longer than just a





few miles, I began to forget about the annoyances associated with carrying this large folder around. For commutes on which the cycling part is the biggest chunk, it would make perfect sense. Not only does it ride really well, it looks great too. In terms of style, the lack of down tube sets it apart from your regular 'fixies', but it's still very much a real cyclist's bike.



FIT for purpose:
folding's a cinch



Verdict

The first thing to say is that, when riding either of these bikes, you forget you're on a folder, and that's key. After all, if you're sacrificing practicality, you want something in return.

Do you now see the point of a full-size-wheel folding bike? I think I do, just about, but not for my commute. If I need a bike to get to work, perhaps via the station, I don't mind sacrificing a little bit of ride quality for a smaller folder that I can pop under the stairs at home and easily slip into the boot of my tiny hatchback and carry up as many stairs as I fancy.

Where the 700c folders do work exceptionally well is in leisure applications. If you want to travel and ride, then these bikes are in their element. They take up less car space than a proper road bike, but when you

get to your destination, you'll be able to ride longer, faster, and hopefully with more pleasure than a little-wheeled commuter. I even imagine you could fit one into a (pretty large) suitcase, if you were so inclined.

Boston's the best

The Montague and the Pacific handled tarmac differently. But they would, their designs are so radically different. The Boston feels like a fixie. It's both stable and reliable, while being sharp and responsive at the same time. The Pacific on the other hand, is very upright, very sensible. It's easy to manoeuvre but it's not nearly as stable, and nowhere near as fast. It's good in the right situation, namely, riding through busy streets and handling a train/cycle commute.

I had to keep reminding myself that the Pacific IF Urban has a price

“The Boston feels like a fixie. It's stable and reliable, while being sharp and responsive”

tag double that of the Montague Boston. You do get more for your money — there are more gears, disc brakes, and a much more intuitive folding system. So, I wouldn't say it's too expensive. But Montague has kept things simple and saved you a shed-load of cash in the process.

If you ride around town, do you need eight gears and disc brakes? Perhaps not. They're nice to have, but these luxuries come at a large price. I certainly didn't need the extra few kilograms of weight to carry around. The Pacific IF is good, but for me it simply doesn't come with the single important factor: a good ride. And what's the point in buying a folder with big wheels if the ride doesn't make it worthwhile?

The Boston, on the other hand, is a great package. The price is right for a good quality single-speed, and the ride is good enough to stand up in town or country against any conditions. It might not have been as easy to fold as the Pacific but the lower weight made a big difference to its usability, and when it came to the crunch I found myself choosing it over the Pacific every time.

Overall, I have enjoyed the experience of 700c folders, but I'm no commuting convert. That said, when my next camping holiday comes around, I might just take one along for the ride.

**PACIFIC
URBAN IF**



**MONTAGUE
BOSTON**

