



CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 2

Folding bikes an ideal option for cheap commuting

Lately you may have noticed more and more push-bikes on our paths and roads.

No doubt two of the major factors behind this very rapid growth in popularity among workers have been the rising cost of fuel and higher parking fees.

One economical and handy solution often overlooked by commuters is the folding bike.

These clever machines take only a few seconds to collapse or unfold and are a boon for people living in apartments. Some reduce down to the size of a small suitcase and weigh as little as 8 kg. If even this becomes too heavy to carry, many come with a storage bag that has castor wheels on the bottom allowing it to be pulled along like luggage.

Most importantly, folding bikes can be securely stored in tight spaces such as the corner of an office, a factory locker or a car boot.

Although ideal for shorter journeys, most folding bikes are not the best choice if you intend heading off-road, into the hills or taking long rides of 20 km plus.

They often have smaller wheels - a 41 cm or 46 cm rim diameter compared to the 70 cm rims of a standard-sized hybrid or comfort bike. This doesn't present a problem on smooth surfaces but gives a noticeably rougher ride on uneven ground.

It is possible to buy folding bikes with full-sized rims but they are heavier and less compact than the small-wheel versions.

A common concern for people considering a folding bicycle is that they must compromise on performance for convenience. However, special gearing on newer models means a rider on a folder can maintain the same speed as they can on a standard bike, using the same amount of effort.

Except for very tall riders, most folding bikes can be easily adjusted to create a comfortable riding position.

In the past, another obstacle has been the higher purchase cost.

However, as their demand has grown, prices for folding bikes have come down and they are now only slightly more expensive than standard-sized models of an equivalent quality.

So next time you are sitting in a traffic jam or gasping at the latest parking fees, give some serious thought to the benefits of owning a folding bicycle.

