The 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.

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 1× setup is controlled by just one lever, the bike came with shifters on both sides.

Verdict
The Islabikes Luath is a well thought-out entry-level bike that’s comfortable and capable as a commuter, gravel bike or tourer. 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.