

First look

Euro-style,
equipped-with-
everything
aluminium town bike
from a US brand



“
The bigger
efficiency
losses come
from the hub
”

Tech spec TREK DISTRICT 4 EQUIPPED

Price: £1,675.

Sizes: M, L (tested),
XL (S, M, L for the
mid-step).

Weight: 15.85kg
(34.87lb), as shown.

Frame & fork:

Aluminium frame
with 68mm threaded
bottom bracket,
adjustable dropouts,
splittable seatstay
and fittings for rack,
mudguard and three
bottle cages.

Aluminium fork with
fittings for mudguard
and low-rider rack.

Wheels: 40-622

Bontrager H2 Comp
tyres, 622×20

Bontrager

Connection
double-wall
aluminium rims, 32×3

spokes, Shimano
DH-3D37-NT 3-Watt

dynamo front hub,

Shimano Alfine

8-speed rear hub.

Transmission:

platform pedals,

Gates CDX S250

aluminium chainset

with 175mm cranks

and 46t ring, VP

BC73C square taper

bottom bracket,

Gates Carbon Drive

120t belt, 22t Gates
CDX sprocket.

Shimano Alfine
8-speed shifter and
rear hub. Eight ratios,
31-94in.

Braking: Shimano

MT200 hydraulic
levers and disc

callipers, 160mm

Shimano RT10

CenterLock rotors.

Steering & seating:

Bontrager Satellite

Elite lock-on grips,

690×31.8mm

aluminium low-riser

handlebar, 90mm ×

7° Bontrager Comp

stem, VP threadless

headset. Bontrager

Commuter Comp

saddle, 27.2×330mm

Bontrager alloy

seatpost, Allen-bolt

seat clamp.

Equipment: SKS

plastic mudguards,

MIK-compatible

aluminium rear rack,

Pletscher Comp Flex

18 kickstand,

Herrmans H-Black

MR9 200-lumen front

light, Herrmans

H-Trace ECO rear

light, Axa Defender

frame lock.

trekbikes.com

high for a town bike, making it more of a stretch to get a toe down at junctions. Bottom bracket drop is the same as the Abington's, but with wheels about 2cm larger in radius you sit that much higher. A lower bottom bracket would be helpful.

Although the frame is painted utilitarian black, there are reflective details and logos, making it stand out at night. Frame fittings are included for everything you might need, including multiple bottles. The brake hose guide behind the fork crown can be removed for UK use. It's there to give a gentler curve to the brake hose if your front lever is on the left, like in Europe or the US.

Components

Both bikes employ Gates Carbon Drive belts and Shimano Alfine 8-speed hubs. As well as being cleaner than chains, belts are quieter and lower maintenance; you can wash dirt off with water. They typically last longer as well, anything from two to four times as long as a chain. On the other hand, they cost twice as much and far fewer shops stock them. Moreover, you have to buy the right length, which is printed on the belt, as you can't shorten it. Then there's the efficiency issue, which I'll get into later.



Top: The seatstay splits to admit the belt, while adjustable dropouts enabling tensioning



Bottom: Low-maintenance and effective hydraulic discs

An 8-speed Alfine hub has a 307% range. Whether that's all fine (pun intended) depends largely on the 'chainring' and sprocket sizes provided, which will typically be larger with a belt drive as belts don't do tight-radius bends as well as chains. Where you ride also matters. Living in a hilly town, I found both bikes over-gearred, especially the made-in-Cambridge Abington. Since you can't shorten a belt, lowering the gearing would mean getting a new belt to fit your new (and somewhat choice-limited) chainring/sprocket combination. Alternatively,

you can buy the Abington with an 11-speed Alfine hub (+£250) or a 14-speed Rohloff (+£1,250).

Bottom gear issues aside, an 8-speed hub is a good choice for a utility bike. Shifting is reliable and you can go from top to bottom while waiting at the lights. The hydraulic discs that both bikes have are likewise excellent, offering fit-and-forget braking in all weather conditions. Tyres need to be tough when a bike is going to be ridden by a maintenance-averse cyclist. The District's Bontrager H2 Comp tyres are OK in that regard; the Abington's Schwalbe Marathon Pluses are ideal. They roll better than their heavy, wooden feel would suggest, and they're

