We try the Batribike Breeze, a modestly priced 20"-wheeled folding bike with ‘twist and go’ electric assist...
Batribike are a family company, founded in 2007, based near Lincoln, and they specialise in models at the more affordable end of the electric bike market. The Breeze is their lowest priced machine at a RRP of £749; they also run a range of full-size bikes, another folder (the Quartz) with low step-through frame, and a popular tricycle model, the Trike 20, at £1199.

There are two colours available for the Breeze: 'Wine Red' or 'Royal Blue' as on our test bike. Optional extras include a storage/transport bag (£35) and spare batteries (36V, 8Ah, £290).

All of the Batribike products are sold through dealers, of which there are currently around 50 in the UK, and one in Ireland (GoEco). The warranty on the Breeze (and for their other models) is one year, including the battery which is, they say, expected to last “up to 1000 charging cycles”.

It’s worth mentioning that Batribike have a comprehensive website, including user manual downloads for all of the bikes, and a commendably impartial ‘Electric Bike Buyer’s Guide’ as a free PDF download – I found little to disagree with in it. They’re also members of trade association BEBA and exhibitors at many cycling and outdoor events where they offer test rides on the bikes: see their website for the events diary.

**ON THE BIKE**

The Breeze first caught my eye at one such event, being test-ridden by an elderly lady. She went past with a huge grin, and with the curvy, colourful Breeze frame and 20” wheels in perfect proportion to her petite frame. Trying one later I was surprised to find it fitted me too, at 6’ 2” – it’s not just for the smaller or lighter rider. It’s rated for a maximum rider weight of 130 kg, higher than many other folding bikes.

The alloy frame is nicely curved, giving an easy step-through onto the bike for less limber riders. It’s hinged in the middle for folding, with a quick-release lever to lock it together and a spring-loaded safety pin for backup. Cables run down inside the frame and through the hinge, keeping everything tidy. At the back the frame is extended both to accommodate the batteries and to provide a wheelbase similar to that on a full-size bike. That should help ride comfort, stability and with heel clearance if you have panniers or bulky luggage on the rear carrier rack.

The 36V, 8Ah battery pack slides down behind the seattube, with the saddle equipped with a quick-release pivot system so that it can be tilted quickly out of the way for battery removal, once it’s been unlocked of
course. The battery pack is of the familiar aluminium-cased variety, with a charge status display on the top by the carry handle. Control electronics are fitted below the battery base.

The handlebar controls consist of a twist throttle on the right hand, plus the control console just near the left hand. This provides on/off, three levels of assistance in ‘pedelec’ mode (i.e. motor operates whenever you’re pedalling) and a four-stage battery charge level display. Cables from this, the throttle and the two brake cut-out switches all run to a heart-shaped plastic box below the handlebars before diving into the frame on their way to the controller, battery and motor.

The bike parts on the breeze are basic but solid. A six-speed derailleur transmission from Shimano is fitted, along with V-brakes and a set of good metal brake levers. The gears are shifted via a lever (for downshifts) and button (for higher gears) set-up for your right hand. Both 20” wheels use Kenda tyres (47-406 size) and have mudguards already fitted. The front is supported in a basic set of suspension forks.

Finally, a useful side stand supports the bike well for parking, and battery-powered LED lights are provided front and rear.

**THE FOLD**

There’s nothing complicated about folding the Breeze. Just fold it in the middle by undoing the quick-release and then lifting it to disengage the safety lock. Then drop the seatpost and fold the stem by unscrewing the clamp – no secondary safety catch here, so make sure it’s well secured before each ride. Fold the pedals to finish.

The folded package isn’t a bad size: you’d get two into most reasonably sized car boots. But there’s nothing to hold it together so it’s awkward to lift without it flopping around. A simple Velcro strap would cure this, or the optional carry bag.

There is a useful metal bracket under the frame which the folded bike stands on, avoiding any possible damage to the chainrings or chain.

Unfolding is also simple, just the reverse of the above. It doesn’t seem to matter in which order you fold or unfold the various parts, so it’s hard to go wrong.

**ON THE ROAD**

First impressions of the Breeze are of a surprisingly stable and comfortable bike – I put that down to the long wheelbase, fairly wide tyres and a generously padded saddle! There are also well-shaped ergonomic grips on the bars. Even those who haven’t ridden a smaller wheeled bike will find the handling easy – it feels quite ‘full size’.

Once the bike is switched on, the electric power kicks in automatically shortly after you start pedalling – within about a pedal stroke and a half. You can also override this via the throttle, which gives direct control of motor output whether you’re pedalling or not. This is handy for starting off or for quick bursts of power if you’re just riding along in low or medium mode – the throttle always has ‘high’ on hand. But the automatic modes are also good, so that you don’t have to keep the throttle twisted for long periods, which can start to strain the wrist on your throttle hand.

Occasionally I would have liked an easily accessible ‘off’ mode as one of the power levels – when manoeuvring through pedestrians on a shared use path for instance. In this situation a power surge (and motor noise) as you take just a few gentle pedal strokes is unwelcome. Of course you can turn the whole thing off, but that’s less convenient as the system takes a few seconds to initialise when switched back on.

When it’s working, the motor gives a noticeable low buzz, but you’re quickly used to it. It dragged even me (a heavyish rider) up to speed smoothly and with plenty of power, and if you can keep the speed up it’s also not a...this suggests it’s more a bike for those who want to be pulled along, rather than one for pedalling enthusiasts.
`top` is pretty low – and I tended just (and hence going slower) to put any We can send Readers beyond the UK should order which issue you’d like the subscription to start. with your name and address. Please specify with Vision, Freepost RSBT-TLTE-RBHU, YORK YO30 4AG /L50539 /L50539 also available while stocks last. for three issues. Back issues are just £7.50 (including UK postage) just £7.50 (including UK postage) door, why not subscribe? It costs all except on the steepest of hills. The battery casing would rattle in criticism. With the throttle it’s an easy bike to use without any pedalling at all except on the steepest of hills. The main reason to pedal (but putting in no effort) is to make the auto power kick in, if your throttle hand gets tired. 

Batribike claim a range of 25 to 40 miles, depending on power level and all of the other many factors, and my commutes to work and back (5 miles each way) bear that out – it managed two trips (20 mostly flat miles) with some charge in reserve, at which point I hooked up the charger. The motor loses a little eagerness as the battery is almost depleted, so if it wasn’t for test purposes I’d have charged it after every day’s ride so as to keep the charge level up. This not only avoids the risk of a tedious unassisted ride steep hills you’ll need to be riding unassisted or on a lower power mode (and hence going slower) to put any pressure through the pedals. The battery casing would rattle in its mount over bumps sometimes, but apart from that there’s little to really criticise. With the throttle it’s an easy bike to use without any pedalling at all except on the steepest of hills. The main reason to pedal (but putting in no effort) is to make the auto power kick in, if your throttle hand gets tired. 

**SUMMARY**

The Breeze is a good solid electric folder without any pretension – its specification is fairly basic, but so is the price. The electrical system is made up from standard imported components, well proven by now, and they do the job well. The bike aspects are also basic but very functional. Gearing is rather low, as on many electric folders for some reason, so you won’t be able to help the motor by pedalling except at fairly low speed. Along with the ‘twist and go’ throttle, this suggests it’s more a bike for those who want to be pulled along, rather than one for pedalling enthusiasts. Minor niggles include a battery pack which rattles on bumps and the modest motor noise, neither big deals. I’d also have liked the bike to hold together somehow when folded; this would make lifting the 23 kg of it into car boots etc much easier. The optional carry bag would be a solution here, or a simple strap. There’s also a good established company behind the Breeze; Batribike offer full spare support via their dealers and I’ve seen very good reports about their customer service. The quality of the user manual and of the advice on their website is also confidence-inspiring.

Definitely one to check out if you need an electric bike which can also fold, at the affordable end of the spectrum!

Peter Eland

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**ON TEST: Batribike Breeze**

**HIGH POINTS:**
- Folds to car boot size
- Carries up to a heavy 130 kg rider
- Fits many rider sizes
- Comfortable ride
- Strong power assist with throttle control

**LOW POINTS:**
- Gears too low
- Not the lightest folder around
- Battery rattles
- Folded package flops open easily
- Not silent

**GOOD FOR:**
- Budget buyers who need a folder
- Non-pedalling riders
- Those after a comfortable, compact ride

**Available from:**
Batribike dealers: contact Batribike (Tel 01427 787774) or see www.batribike.com for details of your closest.

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