

# FLAUNT VICKO

## Power and range at a great price

**F**launt Electric Vehicles was founded in 2013 with the idea that eco-friendly transportation could be both stylish and affordable. In 2015 they unveiled two prototypes at the Interbike show that the company would crowdfund and start selling in late 2016. Kevin Mount of New Smyrna Beach, Florida, is the main man behind this.

There are two models—the Atticus, which has an aluminum frame with a top tube that forms a high arc that curves down and forms the seat stays, and the Vicko, a lower step-through frame. Other than the front triangle, both bikes are identical in every other way.

### THE POWER

There are three power levels and six levels of assist. That sounds redundant, or at least confusing, but it makes sense when you understand that the power levels are Eco, Normal and Power, then assist levels 1–6 within each of those. Eco gives you very gradual added assist; Normal provides a quicker, stronger push; and Power kicks you from behind when you take off. There's also a "walk assist" built in to help you if you have to push the bike up a hill or up stairs.

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In addition to the pedal assist, there's also a thumb throttle that allows you to add power at any time. The bike has a cadence sensor only—no torque sensor, which means it delivers all the power you ask for at any assist level, in full, as long as you are making the cranks go around. This is great for people who want an easy ride and less great for people trying to get in a workout.

The Vicko is geared pretty low. It's easy take-off in lower gears, but if you like pushing 20 mph, you'll either learn to spin your legs out or just pedal slower in assist level 6 so you hit 20 by simply pedaling at any cadence.

This means the motor is doing all the work. Lower gears are great on hills, but on long flat sections of road you can run out of gears early.

The seven-speed Shimano Acera SIS system drives the 500-watt Dapu-gear, easy-to-use hub motor. When the motor is off, there's no discernible drag. When it's on, the motor is pretty quiet. You hear more sound from the tires than the ground.

Like most bikes, this one cuts power at various speeds depending on power level. To reach 20 mph,

you'll need level 6. Level 4 will only get you power up through about 14 mph. A pure sine-wave controller makes the motor run smoother and quieter.

One of our test rides was on a windy day that was a borderline gale-force wind. Going up a hill into a heavy wind is normally the stuff of nightmares for most cyclists, but the Vicko just ate this up without flinching. Talk about a great equalizer.



{ FLAUNT }





off-road riding with confidence.

## UNEXPECTED COMFORTS

The bike is somewhat adjustable. The seat height can obviously be adjusted using the quick release. The stem is also adjustable to make it taller or shorter, closer or farther away, using a hex key to get the perfect riding position. The bars can go pretty tall for those looking for a more upright position. Even the forward setting on the stem feels pretty upright on this bike. A fairly steep head tube and shorter front triangle add to this, but not in an uncomfortable way. The bars are really swept back.

Front suspension is an SR Suntour NEX e-bike-specific fork with 75mm of travel—plenty for taking the bumps out of the road, at least at the front wheel. It can be locked out for climbs. The frame is aluminum and unforgiving, save for the tires and saddle alleviating some of the bumps.

The saddle is plush, and beginner and intermediate riders will love all the padding, even on longer rides. The bell on the handlebar is pleasingly loud and provides a good warning to others that you're coming. It's also adjustable on the fly, letting you position the trigger anywhere your thumb will easily find it.

The Tektro mechanical disc brakes use cutoff sensors, which are especially at the higher power settings, as feathering one brake lever or both keeps the bike from lurching forward at stoplights if you pedal slightly to set your pedal position as you wait for the light. Even with some of our heavier staff and with the bike laden with cargo, we found the mechanical discs more than adequate for this bike. They were actually quite good.

There's an integrated headlight and taillight. When they're on, they're bright enough to be seen on night rides. When they aren't on, the rear light acts as a brake light. The brake light is mounted below the battery on the rack. Between the rack-mounted battery and the hub motor, the bike is very back-heavy. You don't notice it while riding, but if you have to move it up and down stairs, you really notice it.

The rack will allow for most third-party accessories—from tie-downs to panniers. It's sturdy enough to likely carry another person in a pinch, even though it isn't rated for that.

There are two choices of tires, either a 26x1.75-inch hybrid or 26x2.1-inch knobby mountain tire. You can order it with either set, but our bet is that most everyone will order the hybrid tires for their lower rolling resistance and noise. Flaunt chose stainless steel spokes and a galvanized steel chain for rust resistance, as well as applying a rust-prevention treatment throughout.

If you want to make sure you have more range, an extra battery will set you back only \$425, effectively doubling your range. On low power you could likely ride a century if you were so inclined. If you ever ride the battery fully flat, or just want to ride it without any added motor power, the Flaunt also rides well as a non-assist bicycle.

## THE VERDICT

As an all-around bike for daily use, you get a lot of bike for the price with either Flaunt model. It's stealthy, the rear hub is small enough to go unnoticed



The Shimano seven-speed cassette shifted true, but we found we ran out of gears easily on flat ground.

## SPECS

**MSRP:** \$1830

**Motor:** Flaunt/Dapu-g geared 500 watts

**Battery:** Samsung 36V 15.6 Ah

**Charge time:** 3 hours

**Top speed:** 20 mph (with assist)

**Range:** Up to 40 miles

**Drive:** Shimano Acera

**Brakes:** Tektro mechanical disc

**Controls:** Dapu LCD

**Fork:** Suntour NEX with mechanical lock-out

**Frame:** Aluminum

**Weight:** 58 lb.

**Color choices:** Matte Aqua, Matte Black or Glossy White

[www.flautvehicles.com/vicko/](http://www.flautvehicles.com/vicko/)



***The 500-watt motor provided ample power for every ride and every hill.***

***The SR Suntour NEX fork is e-bike-specific and provided enough travel to dampen every bump we found. We never used the built-in lockout.***

***The front light was plenty powerful to let others know we were there and actually provided some good light for seeing the road.***

and the battery is semi-hidden in the rack, if you even worry about people noticing. It's a good-looking, comfortable bike with great range and power, but may have too short of a front triangle for taller riders.

Though there's an option for an off-road, knobby tire, we recommend getting it with the hybrid road tire. It's a quieter, smoother ride that will still let you ride in some gravel and dirt. Though they offer that it can be

a capable mountain-type bike, we'd recommend a more purpose-built machine for that. As a versatile bike that's comfortable on commutes and just for fun, we liked the Vicko. ■