

Plugin Drive Tech Sprint

If ever there was a time for the two-wheeled commuter to consider swapping the internal combustion engine for something a little bit cheaper to run then that time is now. Petrol prices are spiralling out of control and you're kidding yourself if you think it's a short term problem. If you would like to spend as little as 70p to do your weekly commute, read on...

It's been a few years since I last used an electric scooter and I must admit that it had been a conscious decision. Basically because I love the whole mechanical, living, breathing, petrol sipping, fume emitting engine and all that goes with it. I'm a petrol head.

The thought of an electric motor doesn't excite me too much, but I'm beginning to take alternative forms of transport a bit more seriously. Advances in technology means they are starting to become a viable solution for the average user and never having to use a fuel pump again seems very appealing.

Electric vehicles come at a cost though; for example a similar spec 125cc Chinese scooter would cost you around £1800. The Plugin Sprint costs another £3000 because you're paying a premium for the expensive batteries, motor and electronics. It's a lot of money, but when you think about the long term running costs (or lack of them)

compared with a petrol scooter that extra £3000 can soon be clawed back.

If you commute by scooter you'll be spending perhaps £15 a week on fuel, that's £780 a year (if you commute by car instead you can easily double that, plus parking costs and congestion charges if you work in London), then you've got road tax at £15 a year and servicing costs. A full charge on your Plugin will cost around 70p and you get a range of 40 miles on average (depending on use and terrain), road tax is free and servicing is minimal and cheaper than with petrol vehicles.

The Plugin Sprint is a nice enough looking scooter, especially from the front end. Look around it though and it's still quite obviously Chinese; the switches, instruments, panels and things like the wobbly seat hinge aren't quite as plush as they could be, which is a shame.

The overall finish on the Sprint may not be up to the standard of a top quality European scooter but how is it to ride? If you've never ridden an electric scooter before it's quite straightforward. You turn the ignition key (just like any other scooter), take it off the stand, twist the throttle and you're away.

At first the scooter feels like it's a bit jerky, but I quickly realised that I was still feathering the rear brake which cuts power to the motor. Once I was away I was quickly impressed at how smooth the scooter felt and how well it picked up speed. The only sound is the road noise from the tyres and the wind, plus a slight 'milkfloat-like' whine of the motor.

The Plugin is very similar to riding a conventional petrol scooter, albeit a heavy one, but thankfully it carries the weight low down which helps it to handle very well, so it'll lean into corners and can be flicked about through bends like a sporty 125.

Within a mile of my first ride I was confident enough to overtake cars on a



This is the closest you'll need to get to a petrol pump!

