

Don't be stingy – choose the right bulb

Bulb test H7. A choice of the right bulb can be the difference between good lighting and lousy lighting. To be stingy about 50 SEK (5 EURO) can be fatal to traffic safety.

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As a consumer journalist and car tester you are driven by a desire to find a really good product. A juicy shopping advice that makes the readers happy and car owning more fun. But sometimes you have to settle with the opposite – that is to completely advise against a purchase and to avoid complete failures.

So now we have to take strong measures and make Biltema sad. Their H7 bulbs are rubbish. Lousy. It shouldn't be allowed to sell them.

Why the precision is so poor, we don't know. To be completely sure, we bought double sets of bulbs and we also let the bulbs change places. The same bad result. The filament gets in the wrong place, and this gives a poor but above all weak light pattern.

The only excuse you can say about the H7 bulbs from Biltema is that they are consistently lousy. A poor comfort...

On the other hand, there are lots of other things to be happy about in this test. As we can see, the established manufacturers Philips, Osram and General Electric – as also the up sticker Ring – are on an even and high level. Not only because they provide strong lighting but also because of the high precision, the light pattern becomes strong and correct.

During the latest years, the "bluish-white" bulbs have been popular with their xenon like lighting. Earlier those haven't been as strong as the best "regular" bulbs, but now there are good alternatives also in this area. Ring Xenon Plus and Philips Blue Vision provide very strong and good lighting.

In wintertime, the bluish-white lighting can be experienced as better and less glaring, especially if you are driving in the snow swirl after another vehicle. Among the best bulbs, we can find many of Philips lamp types. If you are looking for strong lighting, Philips is the right choice.

Many car owners have complained about the lifetime of their H7 bulbs. To some extent it has to do with the construction regulations (H7 isn't especially developed to give a longer lifetime than for example the older H4 bulb) but the villain of the piece is often the car manufacturer himself.

To avoid under-charging of the car battery the tension of the generator is on a high level, sometimes much too high. A higher tension of only a few tenths of Volts can shorten the lifetime of the bulbs considerably.

On our test car, the new Volvo S40, the changing of a bulb is a very simple procedure. A catch is loosened, and then you just lift out the complete headlight electric fitting. With some training you can change a bulb in less than a minute!

But on other car models it can be considerably harder, and you might even need to go to a garage. In those cases the smartest thing to do is to choose a "long life-bulb", which does not provide as strong lighting but it can last 50 percent longer, or even more. In the table you can see that for example Philips LongerLife bulbs provide good lighting and still have a prolonged lifetime.

Good bulbs are in other words important, but when you buy a new car you should really consider to choose xenon lighting. On the images to the right we can see the differences between Volvo S40 with halogen lighting and with xenon lighting.

Volvo constantly has good headlights and S40 is not an exception, but as you can see the xenon technology provides a much stronger and above all wider lighting. You benefit from this on country roads as well as when driving in cities.

The second most important equipment after ESP, electronic stability system, to choose when you buy a new car is the xenon lighting.

Table:

Test results/ H7 bulbs, 55 Watt

<u>Product name</u>	<u>Lamp type</u>	<u>Rec retail price/pair (EURO)</u>	<u>Luminous intensity in the middle</u>	<u>Average luminous intensity</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Philips GT150 Power2Night	Extra strong light	43,4	627	100%	Test winner! Very wide light.
Philips VisionPlus	Extra strong light	34,1	746	96%	A strong bulb that
Philips NightGuide	New special lamp	42,8	709	95%	3 different colours, and intense!
Philips Premium	Standard	18,2	678	93%	A very strong bulb
Philips BlueVision	Bluish-white light	46,7	619	88%	The strongest bulb light.
Ring Xenon Plus 30%	Bluish-white light	39,5	745	87%	Very strong luminous the middle.
Philips LongerLife	Long lifetime	23,1	593	86%	The best choice for intensity.
GE Megalight Plus 50%	Extra strong light	27,4	592	82%	Fairly strong, but n
Osram Silverstar 50%	Extra strong light	32,4	680	81%	The best bulb from
Osram Standard	Standard	18,7	670	79%	Fairly strong to a g
Philips SilverVision	Bluish-white light	37,3	578	79%	Philips has better a
GE Standard	Standard	20,9	554	76%	Fairly strong GE bu worth its price.
Osram All Season	Yellowish light	26,3	629	74%	The best bulb with
Ring Ultra Xenon 50%	Bluish-white light	61,4	676	72%	Ring has better lan
GE Extra Life	Long lifetime	28,5	695	71%	Long life bulb, inte
Osram Light@Day	Long lifetime	28,5	618	66%	Too weak. There a
Osram Cool Blue	Bluish-white light	32,4	629	64%	Good looking light,
Ring Ice Blue	Bluish-white light	30,2	491	62%	Ring has better xen
Ring Arctic White	Bluish-white light	29,6	575	59%	Too weak.
Biltema Standard	Standard	8,8	254	50%	Cheap junk. Do no
Biltema Mega Blue	Bluish-white light	34,9	195	35%	Expensive rubbish.
Biltema Gold	Yellowish light	15,4	121	18%	Super-rubbish. Har

Explanations: The luminous intensity is measured on a board placed six metres in front of the car. 16 measurement points are used. The luminous intensity in the middle is a reference value, the total grade in percent is a percentage of the 16 measurement points. The strongest bulb gets the grade 100 percent. As a comparison, the xenon headlights in the images to the right, get a grade of 164% in comparison with the strongest halogen bulb.

Price comparison (EURO)

	<u>Bulbs with extra strong light</u>	<u>Bulbs with bluish-white light</u>	<u>Bulbs with extra long lifetime</u>	<u>Standard bulbs</u>
Philips GT150 Power2Night	43,4			

Philips VisionPlus	34,1		
Philips Premium			18,2
Philips BlueVision		46,7	
Ring Xenon Plus 30%		39,5	
Philips LongerLife			23,1
GE Megalight Plus 50 %	27,4		
Osram Silverstar 50 %	32,4		
Osram Standard			18,7
Philips SilverVision		37,3	
GE Standard			20,9
Ring Ultra Xenon 50 %		61,4	
GE Extra Life			28,5
Osram Light@Day			28,5
Osram Cool Blue		32,4	
Ring Ice Blue		30,2	
Ring Arctic White		29,6	
Biltema Standard			8,8
Biltema Mega Blue		34,9	

Captions:

Halogen low beam

Volvo S40 has good halogen headlights. Until we change to...

Xenon low beam

...xenon lighting and take a picture with the exact same exposure.

Halogen high beam

The bulb that is used for halogen is Philips NightGuide.

Xenon high beam

Xenon lighting is much wider and also higher, and also far-reaching.

The most important H7 lamps on the market, 22 pieces, were compared. Conclusion: avoid Biltema, invest in quality lamps instead.