

Velo Vision Sample Article

This PDF is a sample of the material in Velo Vision Issue 17, Mar 2005. The contents page is shown right.

To get an idea of our current output, please visit

<http://www.velovision.co.uk/>

where you will find, amongst much else, full subject/author indices, sample articles to download and an online shop where you can subscribe.

If you have any problems or suggestions about the magazine in general, or this PDF article in particular, please email me at

peter@velovision.co.uk

I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher, Velo Vision

Technical notes

This Acrobat PDF file should display correctly on almost any computer. If you encounter problems the first thing to try is to download the latest version of Acrobat reader from the Adobe website: www.adobe.com

If that fails, please send me an email and I'll try to sort it out.

Small print

I don't much like copy protection and legalese, but a few things need saying:

You are free to print the document out for your personal use, but not for resale or for anyone else. Please do not make it available online without permission.

To protect the copyright of Velo Vision and of our contributors, modification of this document, and copying of the contents, have been disabled.

Words and images remain copyright Velo Vision and the original contributors. Please don't reproduce anything without express permission.

Velo Vision is published quarterly by Velo Vision Ltd.
Daily news and updates can be found on www.velovision.co.uk

ISSN 1475-4312

Velo Vision, The Environmental Community Centre, St Nicholas Fields, York, YO10 3EN, UK
Tel/Fax +44 1904 438 224 (from UK, 01904 438 224)
Email peter@velovision.co.uk
Website www.velovision.co.uk

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Peter Eland
ART DIRECTOR: Brian Holt
WEBMASTER: Simon Ward
PRINTER: Stephens & George Magazines Ltd, Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, UK. Tel 01685 388 888

PUBLISHING SCHEDULE:
Issue 18: early June 2005
Issue 19: early September 2005
Issue 20: early December 2005
Issue 21: early March 2006

Velo Vision is a member of INK, trade association of the alternative press in the UK. 
www.ink.com

VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION
We weren't first with the name. Velo-Vision (note the hyphen) is a progressive HPV-friendly bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany, who also make their own recumbents. Velo Vision magazine is working in friendly harmony with Velo-Vision in Germany.

Velo Vision is printed on paper produced from sustainable forests to Nordic Swan standards.



COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
The Hase Tagun on test: see page 26.

OPPOSITE: The Scooterbike Urban on a snowy Knavesmire in York.

All photos by Peter Eland.

[contents]

MARCH 2005

4 News

New folding bikes, ice biking, events listings and more

8 Hauling in the Himalayas

Cass Gilbert tests trailers against a spectacular backdrop

12 The small big man

Saluting a Russian pioneer of human power and sustainable transport

14 One night in Hong Kong

Pedalling the night away at the HK 24-hour pedalcar contest

16 Inventions roundup

A wheelchair-steered tandem, pedal touring boat, modular bike, designer townie, pedal-while-you-work circulation enhancer and more...

22 Rolling in the real world

Mike Burrows tests 20" tyres and explains how you can make your own measurements

25 Personal Bikes invade Leuven

How one bike is taking over the town

26 Tagun tested

Hase Bikes' new two-wheeler revives the long-wheelbase layout...

29 Czeching it out

Now they're in the EU recumbent makers AZUB hope to impress with their latest model...

32 Vive la differential

Scooterbike's Urban trike ridden forward, backwards and around corners.

35 Short reviews

An amazingly cheap and light one-wheel trailer from Poland, Scottoiler, electric bike, LED dynamo lights and more reviewed...

38 On a thin ICE

The budget ICE Q Narrow Track trike reviewed by a reader

40 Catrike cruising

Riding the Catrike Road recumbent trike – one reader's experience

42 Letters

Short cranks, Moulton conversions, Cuba – all this and more in your letters and emails

48 Buyer's Guide: Recumbent trikes

New and updated - we return to the subject of low-down three-wheelers.

56 Subscribe to Velo Vision

And order calendars and back issues

57 Adverts

The best, most interesting advertising around.

Please support the companies, who support this magazine.

WEIGHTY MATTERS

'??kg' in the text of a review isn't very helpful for readers, as I realised just before deadline. So the trusty *Velo Vision* digital bathroom scales were hurriedly deployed on all three of this issue's test bikes. The results? 19.4kg, 21.4kg, and 32kg – read the reviews to work out which is which.

That's a lot of metal. Yet all three bikes received broadly favourable reviews, with the weight mentioned only in passing. Given that pages and pages are devoted in more sport-oriented cycling magazines to the shaving off of grams, let alone kilograms, are we over-lenient when it comes to bike weight?

Maybe so, maybe not. While I appreciate the truly exhilarating feeling of riding a really light bike, when it comes to real practical cycling – commuting, or distance touring – light weight is something I'll willingly sacrifice for function and reliability. If it bothered me, I'd rather just get a light bike for playing on in addition to my utility bikes.

It's all about choosing the right tool for the job. The most satisfying ride I've had in the last few months was on the 32kg Scooterbike Urban. York was in snow, and traffic was at a standstill. A few brave cyclists were falling off, then walking on the ice. But the trike had no problem at all taking me to work, and I even skidded around a bit just for fun.

That's what special cycle designs are all about. They let you complete a transport task – a journey on ice, a bike-and-train trip, or load-carrying – with a minimum of fuss, safely, under your own steam, and make it enjoyable too.

We all need many bikes – some light, some heavy. Now if only I had more space to put them all...

Peter Eland

PS There was a rather underwhelmed response to the 'Back Page' last issue, and we've also had an unprecedented rush in advertising bookings. So I've dropped it for now. To make up for this, *Velo Vision* is now (and will remain) in full colour throughout.

CZECHING IT OUT

We test the flagship recumbent from Czech Republic-based AZUB Bike, now easily available Europe-wide. Is it great value, or just cheap?



This bike's no lightweight, but rolls along in suspended comfort once you wind it up to speed. Here Tom Riley poses for the camera on the Azub 4.

I first saw an AZUB recumbent at the 2002 SPEZI show in Germany: as we reported in Issue 6 they impressed with some ingenious design touches and an enthusiastic young team. They were on the lookout for dealers and were really pioneering the concept of a low-price-point recumbent.

Move on three years and their

flagship model is the AZUB 4, so-called as it's the fourth generation of the design. The main frame tube is now fat and rigid aluminium (made in Japan apparently, and with a five year guarantee), with quality components. They've picked up a range of dealers across Europe and beyond, and are also taking full advantage of the Czech Republic's

recent entry into the EU, which frees them from no end of bureaucracy when supplying bikes to customers in any EU state.

In mainland Europe, it's well worth checking the dealer list on their website – or you can order direct. In the UK, at present that's your only option, although the test bike will probably end up at one of the

dealers who advertise in *Velo Vision*, rather than be shipped back. Although distance selling isn't ideal for recumbents (if only because it's best to try out seats for comfort before you buy) they have simplified the process as much as possible: their prices include shipping within the EU, and after payment by bank transfer the bike just appears in a box a few weeks later.

The prices are still keen, although in 2005 they're no longer alone at the 'budget' end of the scale. For example, D-Tek are taking advantage of exchange rates to bring in a Burley for under £1000, which we'll try to test soon.

That said, AZUB do offer a lot for your money. Prices depend on specification, ranging from 1340 Euros (inc VAT and delivery) for an unsuspended machine with Shimano Alivio components, to 2490 Euros for a Rohloff-equipped, suspended version. In the UK, that's around £930 to £1730 at current rates. Customers beyond the EU will need to add 100 to 150 Euros extra for shipping.

Our bike was a suspended AZUB 4 with SRAM DualDrive transmission at 1590 Euros (about £1100). Ours had the steering under the seat, though an above-seat option is available at the same price. A whole range of accessories are available, including some fine waterproof luggage. Kickstand (9 Euros) and carrier rack (39 Euros) came fitted to the test machine.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The AZUB arrives with handlebars and seat removed, and refitting should be no problem for anyone with an ounce of mechanical competence. The instructions, while in somewhat broken English, are understandable.

Out of the box and first impression is wow – what a paint job. The 'orange-yellow' finish is spectacular (various other colours are also available) and the powder-coating looks to be of good quality. Although no front derailleur was fitted, it was nice to see a post in place ready for one – also useful if you want to mount lights or a fairing.

I was struck back in 2002 at the

range of adjustments possible, and it seems the AZUB 4 has retained or even increased this. The seat can be attached via a myriad of holes in its mounting plates for fore-and-aft (130mm) and ride height (60mm) adjustment, and the top supports also provide a wide range of angle adjustment (27 to 40 degrees) by quick-release. There's also a telescopic boom with 200mm of travel, by combining the seat and boom adjustments you can change the weight distribution, or in

other words where you sit between the wheels.

The handlebar can also be fine-tuned for position and angle thanks to a stem-like clamp system. Steering sensitivity can be tweaked by selecting the attachment point of the connecting rod. Finally, a series of holes to mount the rear shock lets you adjust ride height and suspension stiffness.

The seat is a hard-shell composite design from Optima in the Netherlands, and comes in two sizes.

It's fitted with a 'filter foam' pad – a resilient, open material which cushions without trapping sweat.

The AZUB 4 uses a popular wheel combination, 26" (MTB size, 559) rear and 20" (406) front, and both are fitted with Schwalbe Marathon touring tyres. Both wheels seemed well built with aero rims and stainless spokes.

Brakes are pretty standard V-brakes, and transmission is via the SRAM Dual-Drive system, combining a seven-speed cassette

with a three-speed hub gear. The single 46T front chainring is the only real let-down in the components: the ring is non-replaceable (but steel, so should last for ages) and there are no chain guards to keep your trousers clean and to stop the chain jumping off – as it did a couple of times.

I make the gear ratios with this set-up 29" to 135"; AZUB do offer a 38T ring instead, which takes it to a more useful (to my taste at least) 24" to 112".

on the overbuilt – no bad thing – with a capacity of 60kg. A little red reflector is built in on the very end. The vertical tube below that is drilled to accept a rear light. It does seem to me that the carrier puts standard panniers a long way back – well behind the rear wheel axle – but AZUB do also produce a range of custom recumbent bags to address this. That said, some sort of side carrier rack to tuck panniers beside the rear wheel might still be a useful addition.

If you feel the need for a helping hand, most of the dealers in our ads section have a lot of practice in helping people to learn to ride recumbents...

Once you do get the hang of it, there are rewards in store compared to the easier to learn Tagun. It feels somehow more 'tight' – steering and even balancing are more direct, with the steering wheel below you rather than way out in front. With the weight more evenly balanced between the wheels I also felt more

confident on the front brake. Hard braking did give a bit of suspension dive, but not enough to be disturbing.

The front suspension was nice to have – it keeps the bike tracking smoothly over rough stuff that would otherwise require more balance and steering to overcome. But most of the suspension action seemed to take place on the rear wheel, and the simple swingarm soaked up bumps very nicely. Along with two inches of filter foam on the seat there really isn't much danger of your fillings rattling. It soaks up vibration very well indeed.

I found the AZUB's hard-shell seat comfortable – it's also good to have something unyielding behind you,

especially when powering up a hill or away from traffic lights. Although in these winter days it's easily forgotten, it's worth remembering that some riders find the filter foam abrasive on bare skin or even through just a T-shirt. There are smoother after-market pads available, fortunately, if you don't like it. It's simply removed via a Velcro patch.

Handling was good, and even at slow speeds the steering was light and positive – often I'd go along with just a finger or two on the bars. At speed it felt stable and controllable, and rolled along fine.

The brakes worked well, if not as effortlessly as some disks, and gear

shifting was uneventful, too, with the right-way-up shifter a definite blessing for gloved hands.

As you can perhaps tell, I'm struggling to say much here. It was fun and comfortable riding the AZUB, but it wasn't a bike which particularly stood out for me in any respect. It did the job fine. Perhaps the weight kept it from being a more thrilling ride, but that's not always what you want. For a tourer 'exciting' is probably less desirable than 'dependable', and having a bike that just gets on with it lets you concentrate on other things – like the scenery.

CONCLUSIONS

The AZUB 4 is a very competent recumbent indeed, nicely finished and with few faults. I'm not sure that it really stands out from the crowd, though, except perhaps in its adjustability and in the rear carrying capacity (most are rated at 30 or 40kg tops, not 60kg!). This makes a price comparison all the more interesting and relevant.

Sticking with DualDrive transmission models to level the playing field, the HP Velotechnik Spirit and Optima Dolphin both come in at around £1200 – we'll look at UK prices to keep it simple. The AZUB costs £1100 in UK currency. All very different bikes of course, and the rest of the spec will vary, but it gives an idea. The AZUB is indeed cheaper, but not all that much cheaper...

Is the price difference enough to make up for the lack of a local UK distributor? Up to you, but if you want to ride something that bit different, if you like this bike's particular features or design, and don't mind email correspondence instead of phone calls, the AZUB 4 should certainly be on the shortlist.

Peter Eland

AVAILABILITY

Direct from AZUB or via their dealers (currently in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Finland and France). Details of both are on their website (in English and German as well as Czech): see www.azub.cz



LEFT AND FAR LEFT: Two quick-releases provide secure but fast seat adjustment over a wide range of fore-aft position, ride height and angle. Filter foam cushions the ride.

CENTRE LEFT AND FAR LEFT: At the AZUB front end a single unguarded chainring risks losing the chain occasionally. Note the useful bosses at the top of the derailleur post: good for mounting lights etc. Chain tubes on both runs keep everything clean, and conventional V-brakes do the stopping.

BOTTOM ROW: The DualDrive controls are operated between thumb and forefinger as intended, with some neatly managed, if tight-radius, cable runs. The carrier rack is super-solid, if a bit far back. Mudguards are an optional extra, incidentally, and eyelets are in place on the frame to accept them. And, shown below, there's a choice of suspension setting via a row of mounting holes for the shock.



As the DualDrive system uses just one combined shift unit, with twistgrip for the derailleur and a trigger for the hub, that's fitted to the right-hand handlebar. They've chosen to fit the shift unit 'right way up' so that it's gripped between thumb and forefinger as the designer intended. This does mean that there are some rather tight loops of cables projecting forwards, but these didn't make the controls stiff - when new at least - and are neatly tied together and routed through the handlebar tubing.

The (optional) kickstand fits to a boss on the frame, and is a nice lightweight item which does the job.

The carrier rack in contrast verges

Overall weight as tested was 19.4kg, no lightweight, but for a suspended tourer not outrageous either.

ON THE ROAD

The AZUB, unlike the Tagun, is a 'full-on' recumbent with the bottom bracket raised way up over the front wheel. As such it requires a little more practice before you'll feel comfortable starting and stopping.

The trick is to just push off hard to start – yet keep relaxed as you do so, then learn to squeeze the brakes and get a foot down in elegant co-ordination as you stop. Sounds harder than it is, and a few day's riding will sort most people out.