

## Velo Vision Sample Article

This PDF is a sample of the material in *Velo Vision* Issue 22, June 2006. The contents page is shown right.

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

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I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland  
Editor and Publisher,  
*Velo Vision*

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### Small print

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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.

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### SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Regular readers will know that *Velo Vision's* content isn't exactly planned and 'themed' several issues in advance. Instead each magazine seems to sort of self-assemble just in time, from whatever eclectic articles end up being ready on deadline.

That does keep the magazine fresh, but it also runs the risk that it can swing off balance. Issue 22 is rather a recumbent-heavy issue, with three bikes and a trike tested, plus more recumbent content elsewhere in the magazine.

I do try to bear in mind the different 'constituencies' amongst the readership, and I know that some are most interested in folding bikes, some want more velomobiles, others like 'normal' city bikes, and many also like the more non-technical content. I do hope that the majority enjoy reading about all sorts of innovative bike,

is a smooth performer – can it sting the competition? Find out in our thorough test.

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whether directly relevant to a personal interest or not.

In any case, recumbent non-enthusiasts need not despair. The pendulum will swing the other way next issue as we have mostly upright reviews planned, with a Landescape tandem, Kronan town bike and a child-carrying triplet lined up so far.

I don't think I should be too apologetic anyway. Recumbents are fun, and if you haven't yet tried a few modern bikes and trikes, maybe this issue will inspire you to give it a go!

Peter Eland

PS: With 22 issues now taking up space in the *Velo Vision* stores, we're becoming seriously short of space. Visit the York Cycle Show (see events listing, page 9) if you'd like to pick up some back issues at extremely low clearance prices!

# THREE WAY TEST: RECUMBENT BIKES



**Peter Eland tests three recumbent bicycles from across the price spectrum and across the world: the £850 Bacchetta Café from the USA, the £1450 Nazca Paseo from the Netherlands, and finally the £2150 Burrows Ratcatcher 18/20 from Norwich in the UK.**

## BACKGROUND

This review happened, as is often the way with *Velo Vision* content, rather haphazardly. First one manufacturer offered a bike, then another, and suddenly I had three recumbents to squeeze in. Rather than give them individual reviews, it seemed to make sense to combine the three into one major test.

The three bikes are very different, and not strictly comparable, so we're not testing one 'against' the other. Rather, I hope this will be an interesting look at three different styles of recumbent bikes at very different price points and aimed at very different audiences.

Starting with the most affordable, we have the Café from US manufacturer Bacchetta, recently available in the UK

thanks to importers CycleCentric. It's a medium-wheelbase machine aimed at beginner and leisure recumbent cyclists, and costs from just £850 in the UK.

Next up is the Paseo from the Netherlands, where manufacturer Nazca is well known. They've not made much of an impact in the UK so far, but Laidback Ligfiets in Edinburgh is taking on the importer role and hopes to change that. The Paseo review bike is a fully-equipped, full suspension tourer, and although final UK prices were not confirmed as we went to press, it's expected to sell for around £1450 as tested.

Completing the trio is the Burrows Ratcatcher 18/20. With 'designer' appeal and complete with built-in tail fairing this is unashamedly a fun machine for fast day-riding. Equipped with

top-of-the-line components our test bike would cost £2150.

One thing the three bikes do share – perhaps by more than just coincidence – is an almost identical seat height. With the base around 55 cm off the ground, it's a practical height for general use, easy to mount and dismount, and offering a reasonable view. It's about the sort of height that most recumbent bike buyers would be looking at for a tourer or fun machine. Much lower and you get into low-racer territory: great on a racetrack or a Netherlands bike path, but just not practical for many riders. As the bike gets lower balance gets harder – it's a basic consequence of physics. And if the seat is any higher, mounting and dismounting becomes ever more daunting, especially for not so tall riders.

**LEFT TO RIGHT: the Bacchetta Café, the Nazca Paseo and the Burrows Ratcatcher 18/20.**

Another common feature was the lovely 'new transmission' feeling. From the cheapest to the dearest, out of the box the latest from SRAM and Shimano all shifted smoothly and reliably across the gearing range. Maybe it would be different after many hundred miles, but this review did tend to confirm that above a certain quality level it's weight savings and appearance you're buying with high end derailleur components, not better function.

Finally, having three recumbent bikes in on test alongside the Scorpion trike triggered some musings on the relative merits of the two formats – as you'll see later in this report.

# BACCHETTA CAFÉ



## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Onlookers were divided when seeing the Café for the first time. Some found the steeply-raked forks and spindly frame ungainly – others found it rakish, the bright red frame and black components lending it a sporty and clean appearance.

The Café's frame is a single long beam, made in ovalised chromo steel. It's nicely finished with tidy welds and a striking red powdercoated finish. There's a long headtube to support the steel forks, and it's good to see that frame and forks have standard disk brake mountings fitted ready for possible upgrades. Rear wheel is 26" (MTB) size, front is 20" (406): both seemed well built and were fitted with Kenda Kwest tyres.

The seat is of the type often used



on more upright recumbents, with a big Lycra-covered foam base and mesh back. The Café's model is nicely finished, with a gently curved back and plenty of base padding. The mesh is simply tensioned using large cable ties up the back.

The seat is fixed to a large plastic

block which simply slides back and forth on a horizontal section of the frame, locked by a single quick-release. As the frame tube is oval, there's no problem of it slipping around off-vertical. Neat holes in the plastic base pass through the cables for rear gears and brake.

Once you've moved the seat, you'll need to readjust its angle. This is done using simple but effective telescopic tubes from seat back to rear dropouts: just line up the holes in inner and outer tubes and push through a pin, which locks in place via a spring-loaded ball. The little wire loops that you use to pull the pins look as if they should rattle against the seat supports, but in practice this was never audible.

A fair amount of adjustment is also possible on the handlebars: there's a telescopic section just below where the stem and cables are wrapped with black handlebar tape, plus an adjuster screw to set the angle at which the bars sit in the stem pivot block. This block was nicely CNC machined, and moved smoothly without a hint of play.

You can also turn the top part of the stem right round so that it sweeps down towards you instead of up and away, although this does require re-arranging the cables. Even without resorting to this we successfully fitted the Café in minutes to riders from 5'3" to around 6' 4" – although that was pushing it! When set correctly the arms are slightly bent and you can see over the bars, without your knees getting too close to bashing against the brake levers. I was fine at 6'2", the maximum quoted by the manufacturer.

On the bars are twist-grips for the gears, a good quality SRAM wide-range triple-chainring derailleur system. No chain tubes to keep your trousers clean are fitted at this price.

The brake levers aren't bad, but the Alhonga V-brakes they control are one of the few signs of cost-cutting on the bike. They're rather nasty pressed steel items – they work, but feel a bit flexy and squishy. Replacing these with solid alloy ones, or even Maguras or disk brakes, would be a good and not too expensive upgrade.

The Café came to us pretty much bare of accessories (see below). Measured weight in this state was 14.8 kg. Total load capacity (luggage plus rider) is 122 kg (275 lb).

## ACCESSORIES

Accessories available are:

- Mudguards (£33) – near essential for UK use in my view.
- Back rack (£30): fits onto the rear dropouts and seat rails, mounts normal panniers.
- 'Mid-ship' rack (£37): fits under the seat and lets you mount another pannier each side.
- 'One For All' bag (£50): a smallish bag that attached to the seat back and contains an insulated pouch for a water bladder. Looks good for day rides.
- Big Bag (£60): A large semicircular bag for behind the seat – no doubt more aerodynamic than panniers, and a nice visibility aid as well.

I would have very much liked a mirror, mudguards and some luggage capacity to make this a more practical machine. As it was

I used the Café to tow the Mission trailer, tested elsewhere this issue, whenever I needed to make a 'practical' journey with luggage.

You'll have to work out how to fit your own lights too. A front light goes easily on the bars or front changer tube, and I clipped a rear Vistalite over the seat mesh for night riding – and also fitted the Down Low Glow, as you'll read elsewhere in this issue.



**TOP LEFT:** Seat angle adjustment is via two telescoping tubes: the rings on the pins look like they should rattle but don't!

**TOP RIGHT:** Below the fake 'carbon weave' finish the V-brakes are rather cheap and nasty pressed steel – worth upgrading.

**CENTRE LEFT:** The optional 'midships' rack for low-down loading.

**CENTRE MIDDLE:** The 'Big Bag' fits behind the seat back.

**CENTRE RIGHT:** The rear pannier rack fits onto the seat support rods.

**ABOVE LEFT:** The bars have plenty of adjustment so that you can get a good view without bashed knees. Twistgrip gears were easy to use.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** A nicely machined stem lets the bars pivot forwards and adjusts their resting angle.

## THE RIDE

The Café is easy enough to ride – even for recumbent novices it's fairly much get on and go, just requiring a good shove on the pedals to get going. Once underway it's an easy ride, down to very low speeds, though not quite as rock solid as the Paseo (see later). I found it had just a slight tendency to wander and require correction, rather than sitting smoothly on the line you've chosen.

Not a problem in control terms, but just enough to mean that you can't quite relax fully.

Otherwise steering was easy – it's relatively light but as usual with such matters, the longer I spent on the bike the more natural it all felt. Indicating with just one hand on the bars was no problem at all, and low-speed was fine too, although the ends of the bars bash your knees if you try pedalling at full lock. In practice you learn to coast round the sharpest corners to avoid this, or push the bars forwards.

The seat is excellent, and the fast adjustability of both leg length and angle is a real bonus. As this is the sort of bike you can let people new to recumbent riding try out, it's great to fit it in seconds to different riders.

But what really stands out is the intrinsic ride comfort. It really does feel almost as if you're riding a suspension bike: the long wheelbase, un-triangulated frame, raked fork, full-size rear wheel and padded seat all add up to make this a supremely smooth ride. Smaller bumps or vibration simply disappear, and even bigger hits are mitigated.

The Café also rolls along very nicely: it's no sprinter but when up to speed the position feels aerodynamic enough to cut through headwinds or to maintain a good pace. The transmission ticks over smoothly and shifting was precise, and there are also good clear gear indicators on the twist grips so you know which gear you're in. The gearing range of 24" to 123" was more than adequate for most riding, but could usefully be lowered a bit for touring.

Unfortunately braking performance was mediocre: not terribly powerful, and with poor feel. Adequate, but first on my upgrade list. I can only put this down to the V-brakes themselves: as the cable routing is quite clean.

But overall the Café delivered a very pleasant and easy ride, offering serious comfort and fun in a simple and affordable design.

## AVAILABILITY

Manufacturer: Bacchetta Bikes, USA. Tel +1 727 498 4600 or see [www.bacchettabikes.com](http://www.bacchettabikes.com) UK and EU importer: CycleCentric, Cambridge, UK. Tel 1223 438074 or see [www.cyclecentric.co.uk](http://www.cyclecentric.co.uk)

# NAZCA PASEO

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Paseo's frame came in sober black – not a bad choice for a tourer. There's a choice of six standard colours, or custom ones at extra cost. It's a complex frame, with machined aluminium side-plates tying together the front boom

section, rear swingarm and shock, and a sheet-metal section which supports the top of the seat. The rear swingarm includes a mounting point for a dynamo, a bracket for the stand and cantilever brake sockets – neatly covered with aluminium caps to keep the threads clean.



The frame has a certain curvy elegance to it, but I did feel that the thick black seat cushion rather spoiled the lines of the bike. The hard-shell seat and cushion do, however, make a very comfortable combination. The seat has curved-out sides that hold your back supportively into position, a slotted support at the top to set the angle, and a good wide base for comfort.

Not that comfort is in short supply. At the front there's a carbon-fibre Meks fork, with adjustable preload and damping. Meks are known as one of the better brands for small-wheel suspension forks. At the back there's a swingarm suspension system, for which the top of the shock unit engages in one of three possible notches in those aluminium side plates, offering adjustment for

rider weight and load.

Our bike was fitted with the optional Tekro Aquila disk brakes front and rear, replacing the standard V-brakes. The front wheel is 20" (406) size, and the rear is 26" (559). Schwalbe Marathon Slick tyres were fitted – these seem to be a popular choice for performance bikes just now, and also have the extra safety feature of reflective sidewalls. The optional mudguards are neatly fitted front and rear with stainless steel hardware.

The transmission is the ubiquitous SRAM DualDrive, with a 42T single chainring with protection rings each side. The chain runs cleanly through plastic tubes: on the drive side it's very close to a straight run, so the pulley under the seat won't have much work to do or rob much power.

The return runs via another pulley up by the headset, and covered by a metal casing. It's all very solid and smooth. The ratio range, with a wide-range cassette on the back, is around 25" to 135" – to my taste it could be even lower, losing a little of the high end for an even lower bottom gear.

Nazca had fitted our bike with bar-end shifters rather than the usual grip-shifts. They make a slight modification to the left-hand one so that it can control the DualDrive three-speed hub gear: the central 'click' is for direct drive or gear two, and you simply shift it as far as it will go either way to select the higher or lower ratios – and it worked perfectly.

The carrier rack at the back offers good support for panniers, although it was strange that the top rail, where panniers hook on, has a gentle

curve. All the panniers I tried could flex enough to accommodate it, but if yours have a solid metal rail like some Carradice models you may have problems. The optional low rider racks allow you to carry a total of four panniers, plus more piled on top.

came with the 'Aero' option, which takes the handlebars in a big loop out in front of your knees and then puts the handgrips comfortably by the side of your legs. Adjustment is critical so that you don't painfully scrape shins or bash knees. Thankfully Nazca have provided plenty of adjustment range and even our tallest model could gain enough clearance. Also mounted on the bars was a handy mirror.

One tiny niggle is that the bar end shifters for the gears were very easily knocked as you get on and off of the bike. There's also nowhere obvious to mount a flag should you want one. This was the bike I used most around town, and I ended up cable-tying the Mission trailer's flag to the rear rack.

Measured weight with the very full list of accessories was a hefty 20.6 kg.

dynamo, an upgraded shock unit, and upgrades from the standard V-brakes to various qualities of disk brake, mechanical or hydraulic.

The bike can also be ordered with overseat, underseat or the 'Aero' steering, and non-standard colours are also possible.

Unfortunately UK prices for the accessories were not available as we went to press. A price sheet in Euros is available on the Nazca website, as below.

## THE RIDE

The Paseo's riding position is a strange combination of comfort and sport. Somehow the handlebar setup feels hugely more sporty than the Café's: it feels lower even if it isn't. Maybe it's the way you're sort of enclosed by the bars, as if in the

It's especially obvious when you lift a hand to signal. On the other bikes there's a distinct need to take extra control with the other hand, compensating for the out of balance forces and weight. With the Paseo's Aero bar it's just no problem. The weight of your arm doesn't affect the steering, which is a fore-and-aft movement of each hand at right angles to gravity. The long lever-arm out to your hand grip also allows fingertip control: very low forces are needed on the steering. And at speed it's very easy to make small corrections.

The feeling of total control is boosted by the suspension, which insulates the bike from all but the worst road damage. The thick seat padding is also very comfortable, and I liked the seat shape too.

Unfortunately weight is the price to be paid for all this luxury. On the flat it's not a problem, and the Paseo moves along very nicely – not nippy, but it will eat up the miles with the best of them. But when you hit a slope it can suddenly feel its weight – which is even more than the Scorpion trike (!) – and you're dropping down the gears. Of course it's also very evident when you're lifting the bike over obstacles or the like.

No problems with the bike's other systems. Braking was powerful and positive from the disk brakes, the mudguards did their job. It was a little touch of luxury to have a bike stand and a mirror – looking behind without one is tricky on any recumbent.

As you can probably tell I very much enjoyed riding the Paseo. It did exactly what recumbents should do – be a relaxing, stable ride perfect for touring or days out. I might personally trade off some suspended comfort for lighter weight, but as tested, mostly in the flatlands around York, the weight wasn't an issue and I could simply enjoy.

## AVAILABILITY:

Manufacturer: Nazca Ligfietsen, Netherlands. Tel +31 522 490266 Fax +31 522 490430 or see [www.nazca-ligfietsen.nl](http://www.nazca-ligfietsen.nl) UK dealer: Laidback Ligfiets, Edinburgh. Tel 07981 430 159 or see [www.ligfietswinkel.nl/Laidback.htm](http://www.ligfietswinkel.nl/Laidback.htm)



**Aluminium side plates (above left) provide mounting points for chain pulley, rack and suspension. The solidly-built rack (above) comes with a basic battery rear light, but the curved sides could be awkward with some panniers. The MEKS carbon fork (far left) adds to steering stability while the wide 'aero' bars (left) offer fingertip control. The bar end shifters are pleasant to use but easily knocked.**

## ACCESSORIES

A Deore-level triple-chainring derailleur transmission is also available instead of the DualDrive.

Accessories available include a low rider rack to carry an extra set of panniers under the seat, mudguards (as fitted), a dynamo lighting set, or a system using the Schmidt hub

cockpit of a race car or aircraft. Or maybe I'm just getting carried away.

In any case, notwithstanding the sporty feel, the Paseo was by far the most stable and relaxing of the three test bikes to ride. The widely-spaced bars provide superb control which the other two bikes with their 'hamster' bars just can't rival.



# BURROWS RATCATCHER 18/20

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Although Mike Burrows has been producing the Ratcatcher short-wheelbase recumbent for several years now, what spurred this review was the launch of a new version, the Ratcatcher 18/20. '18' comes from the number of gears – he's added a double chainring at the front and there are still nine sprockets at the back. As for the 20, it's because this model has an unsuspended 20" (406) wheel on the front rather than the previous suspended 16" wheel.

The Ratcatcher is distinctively a Burrows product: the frame consists of aluminium tube bonded onto neat painted castings. Both wheels are supported from one side only, and the seat is also the classic Burrows

curve with the knitted cushion, as used on early Windcheetahs. The seat is formed as part of a striking and aerodynamic red tailbox which partly envelops the rear wheel. Inside is a waterproof space for storage accessed by a hinged section of seat back, which can be flipped forwards to open it up. A mini toolkit containing spare inner tubes, tyre levers and pump is fixed to the back of the hinged section. Neat rubbery bump patches prevent scratches on the fairing when leaning the bike against a wall.

The Ratcatcher is intended as an 'ultimate' bike and the specification reflects this, using



Note the 'Ratty' logo on the headrest cushion!

top-end transmission and brake parts. The brakes are Hope Mini hydraulic disks front and rear, built on modified Hope hubs. The transmission uses largely top of the range SRAM parts, including a weight-saving hollow-pin chain. The two chainrings (36 and 46) drive an 11-32T cassette, giving a gear range with the 26" rear wheel of around 29" to 108". The wheels are fitted with Marathon Slick tyres.

In line with the Ratcatcher's aim of being a fast touring bike, it's steered by a 'hamster' bar: the idea is that with your hands close together, your elbows are tucked nicely in and your arms add as little as possible to the aerodynamic

profile of the bike. This does mean that the bars are very tightly packed indeed. The bars can be adjusted for knee clearance via a telescopic stem, and their resting angle can be set via an Allen bolt in the hinge casting.

Talking of adjustment, there's no leg length adjustment for the front boom, and only about 50 mm of seat movement possible. Bikes are built to order and will fit the purchaser's leg length, but Burrows also maintains that the smooth curve of the seat offers scope for riders of slightly varying leg length to find their own natural position without actually adjusting the bike. This did seem to be the case, as riders both shorter and taller than myself were quite happy riding it briefly at least, simply sliding up or down the seat to achieve the correct pedalling position.

There are several design 'touches' across the bike. An engraved brass plate on the central casting identifies the machine. Old oak plugs seal off the top of the front 'fork' tube and the support for the elegantly curved chainring protector at the front. The guard around the chain pulleys is also a nice curvy shape, and the clean lines of the bike overall, that cantilever front mudguard and the striking red fairing all add to the effect. The single (deliberately?) clashing note, to my eye at least, is the pink 'lollipop' which sticks out above the rear derailleur, protecting it from damage if the bike falls over.

Measured weight was 13.2 kg, with toolkit (pump, levers, spare tubes), tail fairing, mirror computer and mudguards. Given the extras on board that's still competitive against the super-lightweight recumbents from the likes of Challenge.

## ACCESSORIES

Lights and bottle cages would seem like pretty essential accessories, but as far as I could tell there was no way at all to fit them to the Ratcatcher! There's not even room on the handlebars for a front light bracket, and mounting one on the front derailleur post wouldn't be easy either. So I asked Mike Burrows.

For a front light he said he could fit a light mount to the bottom bracket area, ideally based on a particular light the customer might want to use

to ensure an elegant solution. And for the rear you could drill holes in the back of the tail fairing. Likewise for bottle cages it's a matter of drilling mounting holes on the sides of the tailbox. He suggests that if you're not happy taking a drill to it yourself, you let him know what you need when ordering and he'll sort it out for you.

Short cranks are also available if required – standard ones (165mm) were fitted to the test bike as they do take some time to get used to. See Issue 16 for an article about the possible benefits.

light touch. Save signalling until you've got a few miles under your belt – lifting one hand off the bars can be quite alarming at first, as the weight of your remaining hand pulls the bars off to that side. With more practice you learn to unweight the hand on the bars and to use the wrist muscles to hold the bike's course.

But riding along normally it's fine, and the bike feels taut, ready to respond. Maybe it's the tail fairing, or the low weight, but I did feel that this bike really

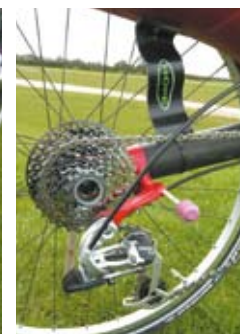
plenty of padding in that knitted seat cover, and it was only really the larger impacts which jarred the frame. If you can avoid the worst of the potholes with careful riding (and fast reflexes on the downhills) there should be no problem. Also be sure to pack riding essentials carefully in the tail box, preferably padded by a coat, so that they don't rattle over every bump.

I was also pleasantly surprised by the comfort of the seat shape. Compared to, for example, the



FAR LEFT: Tightly packed 'hamster' handlebars.

LEFT: The space inside the tailbox is waterproof and semi-secure: when shut, it's not obvious how it opens.



FAR LEFT: Curvy castings and a brass nameplate.

CENTRE LEFT: An old oak knob and curvy composite chainguard

LEFT: The clashing pink protective 'lollipop'

## THE RIDE

As I rather gingerly prepared to launch £2150-worth of recumbent across the concrete for the first time Mike offered some advice: give the bars a deliberate wobble as you set off. This gets the body instinctively correcting – so you'll actually be steadier than you might be if you tried to hold the steering dead straight ahead. It works, too, and it's a hint that was also helpful for various riders trying this and the other bikes.

But the Ratcatcher is a surprisingly friendly ride even at low speeds, although it never feels quite happy until it's moving a little faster. You do need to relax, and grip the narrow bars with a

wanted to accelerate. Riding with a mixed group of other recumbents and uprights for a day in hilly Northumberland, the Ratty seemed to be asking to be let go on the downhills. While doing my best to remain sociable I couldn't resist. Let loose, the Ratcatcher would pull away from the other (not slow, but unfaired) riders quite definitively.

Although it was only my second time out on the bike, the steering felt very confident and stable at speed. The brakes are also excellent – shedding speed as fast as I dared, and not at all grabby.

The ride was certainly rougher than on the Nazca, but I didn't find it unduly harsh. There's

curved and lumbar-supporting Nuzca seat, the Burrows version looks spine-curvingly crude. Yet after several hours on the bike it was still comfortable. Some riders do apparently add a few layers of foam under the cushion to build it up locally to provide back support, but I had no need. Incidentally don't leave the seat cushion on the bike in the rain while you're sitting in a café – if you do you'll have a wet bum for the rest of the day...

## AVAILABILITY

The Ratcatcher 18/20 is available direct from the manufacturer: Burrows Engineering, Norwich, UK: Tel/Fax 01603 721 700. No website or email address.

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The Café impressed with a very strong performance, showing where economies had been made in only a very few areas, principally the brakes and the weight of the frame. With some of the luggage-carrying accessories on board (and mudguards) it could make a very comfortable and none too slow tourer, taking it well beyond the 'lifestyle' riding for which it's marketed. The ease of seat adjustment could also be a big bonus for some family owners. Overall a very positive experience and excellent value.

The Nazca Paseo showed its Netherlands roots with extremely

full equipment but commensurate weight. Yet the wonderfully relaxed and stable steering arrangements, practicality of a proper luggage rack and excellent comfort made it the bike I chose to ride most often of the three. It's quite reasonably priced for what you get, too.

The Burrows Ratcatcher is an exhilarating ride but does also make demands of its rider: just what's required for a fast day ride bike. It definitely delivers when it comes to design 'wow', high-performance parts and hand workmanship with character, but only you can decide whether the pleasure of ownership would be worth the money.



Shall I pick a favourite? Well, money no object, I'd probably pick the Burrows – who wouldn't – but only if I had the storage space for it alongside other more practical machines. If I had to choose a single machine as my only bike or for a longer tour, it would be the Paseo without a doubt. If I had to put my hand in my pocket and actually buy one of the three, I'd seriously consider being a cheapskate and choosing the Café. I could then kit it out with some mudguards and luggage, upgrade the brakes and take it on tour with the money I'd 'saved'!

Peter Eland



## BIKES VS TRIKES

As you'll read elsewhere in this issue, we've also been testing the HP Velotechnik Scorpion trike, and not long ago we tried the ICE Q NT. Riding recumbent two-wheelers and trikes back-to-back brought into focus some of the strengths and weaknesses of each format.

- Trikes are great for touring, preferably with other trikes, for stability on all surfaces, and for the 'fun factor'. Trikes deliver the comfort of recumbents without the awkward starting and stopping which seems an inevitable drawback of bikes.
- Bikes are great if you want to go a bit faster, and if you ride much in groups with riders on uprights. They're also easier to store and transport, and usually cheaper and lighter. You're further away from road splash. They also have a fun-factor, but it's not the same dynamics as a trike.

To expand a little. Trikes excel at touring, especially loaded, where you can travel along as slow as you like in comfort without any balance worries. They're a stable low-stress platform for you and your luggage, and also offer all-weather stability on slippery, icy, loose or dirty surfaces. You can haul on the brakes at any time with no worries about locking wheels – if you do you'll just skid. And throughout your ride you can stay clipped into the pedals, making starting and stopping absolutely no problem.

But all this does come at a cost. Ride with a mixed group of recumbent bikes and uprights and you'll find you're working harder on the trike to keep up, at least in hilly areas. You may gain a bit back on the downhill but in my experience even 'fast' trikes, with good riders, are slower than that same rider on two wheels. Weight, aerodynamics and rolling

resistance all conspire against the trike.

From a social point of view the very low seat of most trikes makes conversation less than easy with upright riders, and even with some recumbent bike riders. And even with the best of mudguards, it's hard to ride through mud or slurry at speed on a trike and not get splattered.

Bikes, on the other hand, gain

generic differences here, your mileage may vary.

I've been gathering opinions about bikes vs. trikes from other riders who own both, and it seems many accept that they'll work a bit harder on a trike, but knowingly take that on so as to enjoy the riding dynamics and stability benefits of tricycles, even on group rides. Others stick to two wheels if they're out with



in speed and lightness, and the higher seats on most 'practical' models make conversation with upright riders much easier. You also get a better view over hedges and the like. But the trade-off is that what you gain in easier pedalling you may lose in the extra concentration needed to balance, especially at low speed, and to start and stop smoothly and wobble-free. Practice certainly helps, but it's really just not as easy as it is on an upright or a trike – especially on uphill starts. Combined with the laid-back position so you can't so easily see out into traffic, recumbent bikes just aren't as comfortable in town or in start-stop traffic. Of course with good riding skill and anticipation some riders find them just fine – I'm only talking slight

others, but ride trikes alone or mainly with other tricyclists.

It also depends on geography: recumbent riders who live in hilly areas with narrow, twisty roads, often dirty with mud or excrement, tend to favour trikes. Riders in flatter areas where wind is more of a factor than hills will go mainly for bikes.

And many go against this trend based on their own particular priorities, or choose based on some other factor, such as storage or transport. Some people just prefer the 'feel' of one or the other. For years I was convinced I was a 'trike person' – but after getting to know these three bikes I'm not so sure. Given more space I'd join the ranks of those who own (at least) one of each.