

## Velo Vision Sample Article

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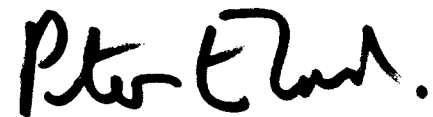
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If you have any problems or suggestions about the magazine in general, or this PDF article in particular, please email me at

[peter@velovision.com](mailto:peter@velovision.com)

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.

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



#### COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

The Challenge Concept XT trike on the road.

**OPPOSITE:** The Koga Worldtraveller on a forest track near Bellingham. Both photos by Peter Eland.

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### TESTING TIMES

Once again we have an issue chock full with bike tests – I hope you enjoy it. Our March issue is always popular with manufacturers wishing to launch fresh products ready for the new cycling season, and our thanks in particular go to both Challenge and Hase Bikes for rush-shipping us test trikes hot off the production line. Our continued thanks also to all of my friends in York who model for the photos and whose 'second opinion' insights I often feed back into the review write-ups.

It's a sign of a flourishing industry that there's a constant flow of significant new models seeking evaluation and exposure to you, the critical reader and potential customer. Are we ever going to run short of new and exciting bikes to test? Not likely!

Peter Eland

# DEPLOY BY FOLDER

The Montague 'Paratrooper' is a full-size folding bike apparently designed for the US military. So how does it fare for civilian cyclists?



## BACKGROUND

Montague folding bikes have been around for decades, but have had a low profile outside of the USA where they were developed. I've always thought it an appealing design, with the chunky main frame tube promising a rigid ride, and the simple fold promising ease of use. Although all of the Montague bikes seem to be aiming at an MTB audience, I was also curious to see whether the folding frame might also be useful for commuters or touring cyclists.

Montague recently gained a new UK importer, handcycle and electric-assist specialists Team Hybrid, who offered me a bike for review. They're currently only importing the Paratrooper model, and we tested the 20" larger frame size version (the other is 18"). Retail price as tested is £495: contact Team Hybrid direct to order.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

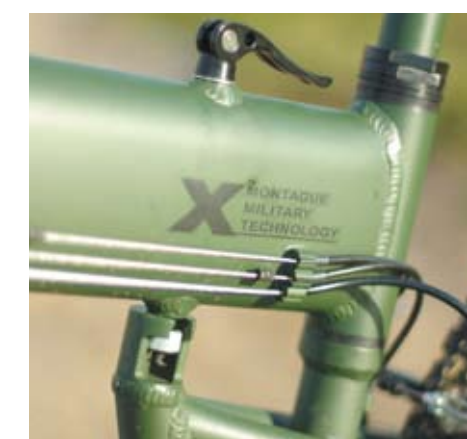
The Paratrooper looks the part out of the box, with camouflage green paintwork and black parts lending it that military look. Welds are neat and tidy – the usual good job from the Taiwanese framebuilders – and although it's an odd shape, it certainly doesn't scream 'folding bike'. Cables are guided neatly down one side of the main frame tube, and reach their destinations fairly directly, without excessively tight bends.

In keeping with its MTB mission, no rack or guards are fitted, and the tyres are MTB knobbles. At the front there's a rather basic Suntour suspension fork, a coil spring-only type with no damping adjustment – and most likely no damping at all except that provided by friction. The instructions that come with the fork say "for leisure riding and sports/exercise only – NOT for downhill racing". I'm no MTB expert, but those I spoke to confirmed that the fork would do nothing for the Paratrooper's credibility in off-roading circles.

The gears are mid-range Shimano, and after a little adjustment worked quite smoothly – definitely not as slick at the Koga's XT, but not bad at all, either. It's a little disappointing to see a chainset with non-replaceable rings at this price – but this did come



The Paratrooper is a slim package folded



The main frame pivot is chunky and solid, and locks firmly into position via the quick release

with a plastic chainguard which might help keep trousers marginally cleaner (but isn't this supposed to be a mountain bike?).

There's a Promax disk brake at the front which, while I'm not sure I rode it enough to complete the wear-in process, stopped pretty well. The V-brake at the back was effective, too. Check that the importer or your dealer swaps them over to the UK 'front on the right' standard, though – mine arrived reversed.

Other components seemed to be of good standard as far as I could tell, including a nice Cane Creek headset. One unusual touch was that the pedal supplied were fitted with toe-clips and straps. Most manufacturers just supply a cheap pair of plastic flat pedals, on the basis that many customers will upgrade to their favourite clipless system if they're enthusiasts, or just use the 'normal' pedals if they're not. Having proper alloy pedals with clips as standard can't be bad...

Weight as tested was 14.4 kg.

## THE FOLD

The fold is a very simple process. First, remove the front wheel. Then, undo the quick-release on the top tube and swing the rear end round. As you do this, move the handlebars round so they're in line with the frame and you end up with a fairly flat if large package (plus the front wheel). Drop the seatpost to make it smaller – the result is around 91 x 76 x 30 cm. It took me well under a minute.

Although this works well, there are a few catches. Both front wheel and

frame quick-releases require the adjusting nut un-twiddling: the one to clear the retention tabs on the fork dropouts and on the frame, to clear the nut recess in the swingarm. This slows the process rather. Both are secondary safety features, but also mean you need to set the adjusting nuts back when reassembling the bike so that the QRs close correctly.

Another minor issue is that as a folder with full size wheels, it's hard to avoid getting your hands all mucky as you do the fold, especially if you've been off-road. With smaller-wheeled folders you can often get away with clean hands.

Finally, given the way the fold works, adding a permanent front mudguard is made rather tricky, as it would stick out at right-angles to the folded package. If you are going to use a mudguard you'll be best with one of the clip-on type. At the back, both a mudguard and rack could be fitted without a huge effect on the folded package.

## THE RIDE

You'll have noticed that we don't test a lot of MTBs in *Velo Vision*, so I felt somewhat out of my depth here. But given the limitations of the fork, it's probably fair to say that most users of this bike will be using it for forest track or bridleway riding rather than serious technical off-roading. That, I can do!

And for this, the Paratrooper did a decent job. On one or two bigger hits I did feel some rather excessive rebound from the forks, but most of the time they just took the sting out of some of the larger bumps without

undue drama. I also tried them on speedbumps on the road – nothing very scary happened even at full speed. I did increase the preload a bit to stop them bobbing, which helped. Climbing out of the saddle revealed why better forks have a lock-out – they just heaved in and out, visibly sapping energy.

On the plus side, the frame felt rigid and responsive, and heaving at the bars when climbing or accelerating felt solid and secure – sometimes a weak point on small-wheelers with their long seatposts and stems.

As a taller rider (6' 2") the bike fitted me well, and there was still plenty of seatpost left.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Montague is a bit of a mixed bag: the frame is nicely finished, solid, and the fold to car boot size is simple. But as an MTB it's let down by an unsophisticated suspension fork.

As the basis for a road-type bike, it's possible to add rack and mudguards, but the fold becomes less and less useful as you do so. If you live somewhere dry, maybe with road tyres it could be a stylish commuter bike, with your luggage on your back.

I think the main potential audience for this bike would enjoy some light off-road leisure riding, which really demands full-size wheels, but also need to fit the bike into a car boot, or a train at a pinch.

The main competition comes from Dahon's full-size folders, some of which are cheaper, but lack suspension or real off-road capability. Other, more expensive Dahon models do promise better off-road performance, but at a price.

So the Paratrooper, though it has its flaws, does bring a unique combination of function and value to the table. With its rugged styling, it's also likely to appeal to many people who might not otherwise consider folding bikes – and that's got to be a good thing.

Peter Eland

## AVAILABILITY

Manufacturer: Montague Folding Bikes: see [www.montagueco.com](http://www.montagueco.com)  
Team Hybrid: Tel: 01329 830 117 or see [www.armybikes.com](http://www.armybikes.com)