

Velo Vision Sample Article



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peter@velovision.com

I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher,
Velo Vision

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VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION
We weren't first with the name. *Velo-Vision* is a bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany. *Velo Vision* magazine exists in friendly harmony with *Velo-Vision* in Germany.

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



COVER: Your editor on the Fuego. Photo: Debz Butterworth

OPPOSITE: Speeding down the Innocent Railway tunnel in Edinburgh, it's hard to keep the camera steady. Photo: Peter Eland

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Not before time

I should have done it years ago! Going to see the dealers with whom I've been corresponding for years was an invigorating experience, and I'm looking forward to my next set of visits before the December issue. Folding bike and train is still an effective and enjoyable way to get around our small island.

It's also been a while since *Velo Vision* exhibited at the Cycle Show in London.

We're there this year on stand D30, and I hope to see many of you there. See the News pages for details.

Finally, some of you may have noticed the 'old yellow bike' making another appearance on page 33, modelling the Klean Kanteen. I'm assured that the long-awaited replacement from Villiers Velo is now at the painters, so next issue should finally see me riding a shiny new bicycle!

Peter Eland



Base prices for the Fuego Allround, Sport and Top Sport are €1895, €2075 and €2275 respectively. In the UK via Laid Back Bikes prices start from £1760 – contact them for full details.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Our orange Fuego arrived almost fully assembled, just needing the front boom popping in and the stem re-attaching at the pivot.

If at first it looks somewhat slim and elegant, rather than brutishly chunky, that's because the main frame tubes are made of steel, rather than the large-section aluminium used on many other recumbents. Nazca say their choice of material helps with absorption of high-frequency vibrations, and they've apparently designed the bike to ensure that there are no nooks or crannies where moisture and dirt could gather to cause corrosion. I certainly couldn't see any.

Three frame sizes are available, and

would apparently conflict with the chainline. There's also a neatly brazed-on support for the optional side stand. This held the bike securely upright on most surfaces, and was often useful – just remember to fold it again before setting off. It's placed so that it can be operated even with panniers in place. A close-fitting SKS mudguard surrounds the rear wheel.

The seat is the usual hard-shell type but with a slightly raised 'nose' intended to stop you sliding forward. I found it fairly comfortable, but it was an 'Medium' size, rather than the 'Large' which would have suited me better. As you'll read in 'Second Opinion', it fitted our other test rider Ian very well.

Bolted to the back of the seat is the small 'tail' rack: this is intended for day bags or the like up to around 10 kg, and it can also help support Radical-type side pod panniers. The rack serves more than one purpose: the 'handle' at the front is ideal for wheeling the bike around, as well as stopping your bag sliding forwards.

The other rack attaches to two mounting points on the aluminium side plates: the top seat support and where the chain pulley fixes on at the front. It's neatly made in aluminium tube, with the front section cleverly radiused to mimic the curve of that pulley. A 'tie bar' at the bottom spaces the two sides apart, and the whole thing is rigid and stable. It'll take full size panniers (some models may then have somewhat limited ground clearance) but the weight is nice and low down, well placed between the wheels, where it shouldn't much affect the handling.



ABOVE: The Fuego can be adjusted without tools through quite a range of ride heights and seat angles.

RIGHT: A useful side stand holds the bike well on most surfaces.

BELOW: Several tidy details to note here, including the curve of the carrier rack around that chain pulley, the solid low-rider pannier rack and the multi-position support for the rear shock.



ours was the 'Medium' size. It fitted a wide range of riders with just the boom adjustment.

The two sections, the main frame and rear swing-arm, are joined together by a pair of multi-functional aluminium plates, which also neatly support the suspension shock, the seat, the chain pulley and the optional luggage rack. The shock has a three-step mounting, letting you alter the rear ride height (no tools needed – it's quick release) and another quick release lets you alter the seat angle (approx 25 – 32 degrees) via a slotted rear seat bracket.

The rear swing-arm is nicely curved, following the swoop of the frame, and it's equipped only with disk brake mounts – rim brakes

The 20" (406) front wheel runs in an aluminium fork, again with disk brake and mudguard mounts. Both wheels are built with Shimano Deore hubs, stainless spokes and black alloy rims; Schwalbe Marathon Racer tyres are fitted. Note the carbon-effect protector on the side of the fork, preserving the paintwork against the rub of the chaintube. Note also the neat dog-leg of the left-hand front mudguard stay, mounted to the top disk brake mount.

Up front, a Deore triple crankset runs on its outboard-bearing style bottom bracket, and a Tiagra

FLYING ON THE FUEGO

BACKGROUND

Nazca Ligfietsen is a husband-and-wife operation from the Netherlands, where they're well established as one of that country's successful recumbent makers. Henk and Monique speak excellent English if you need to contact them directly, but they sell mainly through dealers, who would normally be your first point of call. They have a UK importer/dealer, David Gardiner of Laid Back Bikes. Our review bike came to us direct from Nazca, and we passed it on afterwards to Laid Back in Edinburgh.

Nazca now make nine models in all, and the Fuego is one of their more recent designs, launched in 2006. Readers may remember that we reviewed the Nazca Paseo, a rather similar but higher and more upright 20" /26" wheel model, in *Velo Vision 22*. The Fuego is described as a 'semi-low racer', with a seat height of around 35 cm (39 cm for the smaller frame size). The seat cushion adds a few centimetres too.

The Fuego comes in several possible configurations. Ours was set up for touring, based around the 'Allround' specification which

includes the small rear rack, rear LED, chain tubes, mudguards and 3 x 9 (three chainrings, nine sprockets) derailleur gearing. Also available is a 'Sport' model with Shimano Tiagra 2 x 9 racing components, Alex wheels and lightweight rack. The 'Top Sport' uses 3 x 9 Shimano 105 groupset, air shock unit and race wheels, for an overall weight of around 14 kg. There's a choice of eight standard colours, two frame sizes, and three seat sizes.

A multitude of options are available. The 'Allround' transmission can be upgraded to

SRAM Dual-Drive (€50) or you can have a Rohloff hub gear instead for €1220 extra. Various component and disk brake options are also available, as are dynamo lighting systems and more. A lighter carbon seat instead of the fibreglass model costs €205. An optional cushioned carbon headrest is also available.

Extras fitted to our review bike were the disk brake upgrade to Avid BB7s (€60) and the addition of the low rider carrier rack (€120). An ESCE kickstand was also fitted (€20) along with a B&M Cyclestar mirror. We also had a Ventisit seat pad.

derailleur does the shifting. A chain protector ring is a nice touch, and especially welcome while manoeuvring the bike indoors.

There's a tab with hole on the front of the bottom bracket housing, incidentally, which would be handy when fitting lights, fairings or the like.

The chain is protected for much of its run by Nylon chain tubing, which keeps both the chain and your trousers clean. It adds a very small amount of friction perhaps, but if speed is your priority it's easily removed. I'd leave it on: it's very neatly secured, and the chain pulleys near your leg are fully guarded: no danger of Raptobike 'bites' here.

The controls are mounted to a stainless steel steerer with telescopic length adjustment. This pivots at the top of the fork steerer via a nicely

machined aluminium block, with plastic pads each side. The pivot bolt sets the degree of friction, and there's absolutely no sideways play. A further bolt sets the resting position of the bars – this is easily adjusted as you ride. Another nice finishing touch is the paint protection patch on the main frame where the cables come down off the steerer.

Weight as tested was a shade under 19 kg – with pedals, racks, mirror and stand over and above the 17 kg weight they quote for the standard Allround, it's in line with

BELOW LEFT: A good quality bottom bracket and crankset come complete with a guard ring. Note the tab on the bottom bracket shell for mounting lights etc.

Nazca's figures. As a tourer with mudguards, chain tubes and all it's perfectly reasonable, and the 15 kg Sport model does demonstrate the potential for lighter builds if you can do without some of the equipment.

THE RIDE

Back when I tested the Nazca Paseo I was hugely impressed by its handling, especially the low speed stability. Some of that was, I thought, due to the wide wrap-around bars on that bike – still a layout I like.

The Fuego didn't disappoint, even

BELOW: Nazca's stem pivot is neatly made in aluminium. It moved smoothly with no sideways play at all. The screw adjusts the stem's height above your chest.



preferred to get it to my favoured position and get really used to that. There's certainly plenty of scope for experimentation for the owner who has it for the longer term.

CONCLUSIONS

The Fuego is arguably at the sweet spot of what recumbents do best: it's laid back and low enough that the comfort and speed advantages are clear, yet it's not quite so radical in its stance that it loses practicality. The design details which lend it its versatility are well executed, and there's little of substance to criticise. It's a fun, fast and stable ride, and confidence-inspiring very quickly once you start riding.

The price point is mid-range, but the extra features and attention to detail in the design reflect this, and

it's highly competitive against the few comparable machines.

It's hard to recommend any particular Fuego model above the rest – people's needs will differ. If you're more keen on sporty day rides, then one of the mudguard-free and lighter 'Sport' models might suit. For touring purposes the Allround with racks, as tested, works very well indeed.

As ever, checking it out in person is highly recommended.

Peter Eland

AVAILABILITY

Nazca Ligfietsen: Tel +31 522 490 266 or see www.nazca-ligfietsen.nl
Laid Back Bikes: Tel 07981 430 159 or see www.laid-back-bikes.co.uk



ABOVE: Tidy work on the mudguard stays to accommodate the disk brake.

LEFT: The mirror is nicely placed so that you can look over your shoulder. Some sort of mirror is very helpful on these low recumbents, especially in traffic.

with the tiller bars. It's stable and secure at any speed, and I found it a relaxing ride in all senses. Even getting in and out is easy: just lift the stem up, step over the bike then down into the seat. The bars drop down, and you can adjust them to stop just clear of your chest.

The potential for speed is very clear, but the Fuego seems a bit less urgent than the Raptobike: the slightly higher and more upright seat perhaps (as I had it set up most of the time). I was more inclined to just take it easy and ride along with my companions, taking it easy (working less hard than they were!), rather than haring off ahead. But it is very hard to resist checking out its top speed downhill. The answer is very fast indeed... and quite exhilarating.

It also says something for the confidence-inspiring handling of the bike that I was descending in top gear, at top speed, on my very first proper ride on the bike, maybe 15 miles into the ride, down a hill with a moderate corner at the bottom before a long safe run-out. I felt as safe as I would on any bike, leaning into the bend then straightening out before relaxing and looking back in the mirror for my companions...

Brakes were excellent once worn in. I'd recommend the upgrade to BB7s (and better Avid levers) if you can afford it – they're the

benchmark mechanical disk brake.

The suspension was noticeable, especially over bigger bumps, when it was definitely welcome. As supplied, it was set fairly stiff to accommodate a heavy rider – a lighter user could use a softer spring. The reclined position and comfortable seat pad spread out any bumps anyway, but it's nice to have the bike and luggage cushioned from the worst of the shocks, too. It's just more relaxing.

Adding two large pannier bags and loading them up with shopping made the bike if anything even more stable. You could feel the weight when accelerating but otherwise the load was unobtrusive. I didn't really find much use for the small tail rack, but it would have been handy for day-ride type loads if I didn't have the low rider racks fitted. It's easily removed if not needed, anyway.

Adjusting seat angle and ride height is very easy – just undo the two quick releases and slide it to the new position. I did try the Fuego at its lowest and highest settings, but eventually settled back to a mid setting, as they'd supplied it originally. The changes to geometry do alter the feel of the bike somewhat, and Nazca suggest you could even change it from low to high as you go from rural to urban sections of a ride, for example, or more upright for hills. I generally just

SECOND OPINION

Ian Coulthard also borrowed our test bike and added his comments:

Like the Raptobike, the Fuego is a lovely looking machine, the metallic orange finish on the shiny new test bike really suited it. The Nazca also oozes neat touches and the build quality looks excellent.

Things get even better when you ride it, within a few minutes of jumping on I was happily riding hands off; it's very stable. It's also very adjustable – moving the rear shock position gives a fair degree of ride height adjustment (which also changes bottom bracket height) and there's a reasonable amount of seat angle adjustment too. I was happiest with the ride height at its lowest and the seat not quite fully reclined.

The Nazca really was a delight to ride, the seat, which came equipped with the wonderful Ventisit pad, fitted my average build perfectly and the ergonomics of the rest of the bike gave true all day comfort.

It has a fair turn of speed on the flat too, not as quick as the Raptobike but commendably close. Uphill was a different matter though: like many recumbents with touring gear it's on the portly side so you need to gear down and winch your way up the steep ones. Unlike the Raptobike, the Nazca was equipped to do this; I never had to get off and walk like I occasionally had to on the Raptobike. Descending, the Fuego scored more points by being very sure



footed at speed and having great brakes. The Avid BB7s seemed to bed in nicely during my time with the bike and were seriously powerful by the time I had to (reluctantly) give it back.

The rear rack was good for strapping a Camelbak bladder to, but neither of the rack packs I own would fit it. The built in handle was nice for wheeling the bike around, though. The fitted pannier racks were spot on, I used these with a pannier for day rides and also as supports for throw-over recumbent bags.

If I was to nitpick then a couple more cable guides under the rear fork wouldn't go

amiss. I'd also rather see disc specific rims on a disc only frame, although I imagine these are fairly hard to source. And that's it – there's nothing else I would change – great bike!

CONCLUSION

The Fuego is something of a revelation too. Short of four-pannier touring it'll do anything. And do it well. If you want to do heavily laden touring, bung a trailer on it. With its fine handling and perfect riding position it is an excellent bike in city traffic, relaxing to ride on quiet country lanes and still has a reasonable turn of speed if the mood takes you. If I was looking for a bike with these attributes, I'd be very tempted by the Fuego.

Ian Coulthard