

Velo Vision Sample Article



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peter@velovision.com

I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher,
Velo Vision

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Velo Vision Magazine
York Eco Business Centre
Amy Johnson Way
Clifton Moor
York, YO30 4AG, UK
Tel/Fax +44 1904 692800
(from UK, 01904 692800)
Email peter@velovision.com
Website www.velovision.com

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Peter Eland
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Sue Archer
PHOTO ASSISTANT:
Debz Butterworth
ART DIRECTOR: Brian Holt
WEB PROGRAMMER: Simon Ward
PRINTER: Stephens & George
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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: The Bicycle Orchestra was the star of the show at the SPEZI (see www.fietsorkest.nl).

OPPOSITE: Fun with fruit at the York Cycle Show from Smoothiebikes.co.uk
Both photos: Peter Eland

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On the move

Well, it's been a busy few months. We had another good trip to the SPEZI as you'll read later, and we were also at the Tour de Presteigne electric bike rally, the York Cycle Show and travelling around to meet the latest batch of dealers.

And alongside starting up *Electric Bike* magazine and its website, we've moved offices again (to a larger room within the same building, so no address change). We've also had to grapple with the hosting providers for *Velo Vision's* website disappearing without trace, so it'll be switched over to a new provider shortly. With the help of colleagues and contributors various other minor setbacks have also been overcome, and this issue is finally complete.

It is somewhat late, for which many apologies. We won't make a habit of it...

Peter Eland

TAGGING ALONG



Lisa Haskel, Bill Hulley and their son Eben from London review the Weehoo i-Go, a trailerbike which provides a proper seat for its child rider.

BACKGROUND

Trailerbikes, also known as tag-alongs, are great for bridging the awkward gap between when a child grows out of a bike seat and when they can ride independently for long distances. These devices normally attach behind an adult bike, providing the child rider with their own handlebars, saddle and pedals. So the child can get used to pedalling, while leaving safety and steering decisions in adult hands.

The Weehoo i-Go trailer, originally from the USA, adds a new twist: the child sits in a seat, rather than being perched on a conventional saddle.

We tried an i-Go provided by the UK importers, who sell the machine direct for £240 plus shipping. They also sell spare hitches for £14.99 so you can tow it behind more than one bike.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The i-Go is shipped in a large triangular box with the bottom bracket, chain, frame and wheel pre-assembled. First, the seat frame is screwed together with hex bolts and the seat cover slides over the

seat frame, and is held on with large Velcro pads. Then, the assembled seat bolts onto the frame using a quick release. It can be placed in one of ten positions, giving a range of distances between the seat and the pedals.



The pedals screw on in the normal manner, the panniers fit over the frame and again are attached with Velcro. Finally the arching tow bar connects with a quick release bolt, and a small mudguard clips on.

The i-Go will only hitch to a standard upright bike with an uninterrupted seat post. If you ride a recumbent, longtail or use a suspension seat post you are out of luck. Three plastic shims are supplied to accommodate different diameters of seat post, around which two machined metal plates are screwed together. The arched tow bar then connects onto the hitch using another quick release. We used one of the spare shims with some cable ties to raise the hitching point so the tow bar would clear a rack and panniers.

Incidentally the full product manual can be downloaded in PDF format from the manufacturer's website.

THE RIDE

We had great fun testing the i-Go!

Our child Eben is four and a half. Eben is just a bit too big now for an ordinary bike seat. But more significantly, he is ready to participate in cycling more. The i-Go is a happy medium which allows the child to pedal as much or as little as they can, while providing a comfortable and safe seat in which they can also rest or even sleep.

The i-Go has some really nice features which appeal directly to the child rider and there was no difficulty at all in persuading our own child, or others who saw the i-Go, to jump in and have a ride. The flag of course is great fun and very novel. The



panniers are just the right size for all the kiddie stuff like juice, swimming clothes, packed lunch and snacks. The pedals are big and chunky with tough Velcro straps to hold the child's feet firmly. The harness is fully featured and comfortable.

The seat is also comfortable and feels safe and stable with a tough metal frame with some padding and nice extra pockets, a high back, good sides and chunky handles for the child to hold. There's no good spot to attach a bell though – a favourite feature for child stokers. The long chain is very well enclosed so that there's no chance of trapped fingers or clothes.

The i-Go is probably suitable for children from the ages of roughly three to six years. Through their pedals they can supply a reasonable amount power, although they can stop and start as they like. Depending on the temperament of the child they might need a bit of coaxing to pedal. Fitting a mirror on the adult rider's handlebars might be a good idea

LEFT: The Weehoo ready for assembly.

RIGHT: The seat can move to one of ten positions along the frame to set leg length, and the child's feet are secured to the pedals with Velcro straps. The chaining and chain are well guarded.



so the adult can keep an eye on the child. In a family group some games and incentives might work well to keep the little legs going round.

The trailer is quite low to the ground, which has advantages and disadvantages. The low centre of gravity gives stability which is reassuring to both the child and adult riders. Our child and his cousins also report being able to see well and appreciate their surroundings.

However the low and long design, while fine for tours on quiet roads or in the park, is quite disconcerting for routes with busy traffic. If you encounter really tight wiggles like gates along cycle paths, it can be really difficult to get the whole thing through.

The frame is made from substantial steel tubing and it is quite heavy (they say 15.8 kg). This, and the 'one wheel trailer' layout, makes it somewhat awkward to manoeuvre when it is not attached to the bike. That said, there is a guard tube around the bottom bracket to protect the chain ring, and this also serves as a handle to lift the trailer up higher, balancing on the wheel. Like this it becomes stable enough to move around with one hand, to bump down stairs and to get it into position to hitch up to the bike.

Connecting up the hitch is relatively easy, making sure your bike is propped up against a wall or being held by another person. Once connected up everything is solid enough that one person can hold up the bike and trailer while the child gets in the seat.

The foot straps can be fiddly, but they are important. The seat is low

enough that the child's feet could drag along the ground if not secured. Getting out is easier, and we found Eben could easily undo all the straps himself and hop out of the seat without help.

For the adult, the ride is far more comfortable than having a hefty child in an ordinary bike seat, and it's a relief to be able to fit back panniers again. There is substantially more weight, especially obvious when pulling away from a standstill. But once you are running, on the flat, the additional rolling resistance is minimal, so any effort the child puts in is noticeable. On anything more than a small incline the drag from the trailer requires more effort from the adult. Care must be taken when stopping too: the additional weight adds to your stopping distance and the pressure you need to apply to the brakes.

CONCLUSION

Overall the i-Go is a really nice product at a decent price, and very appealing to children. In an urban setting potential problems might be storage space and obstacles such as gates on cycle paths. It would be great if a future version could be made more compact, and perhaps if the hitch could be more versatile for other types of bike.

Despite the size and weight it would be great for touring, especially if the terrain is reasonably flat. It can be a real problem to cover serious mileage with small children and the i-Go would allow you to do that without the major expense of a tandem, and with the added advantage of being able to unhitch the trailer and use the bikes solo.

Your child would be able to participate with pedalling, too. Although it might not be such a directly relevant training for future solo (upright) riding as a tag-along with a normal saddle, the fact that they can rest when tired and still keep moving will make for a satisfying cycling experience for all ages.

Lisa, Bill and Eben

Weehoo USA: www.weehooinc.com
Weehoo UK importers: Tel 07808 137163 or see www.weehoo.co.uk