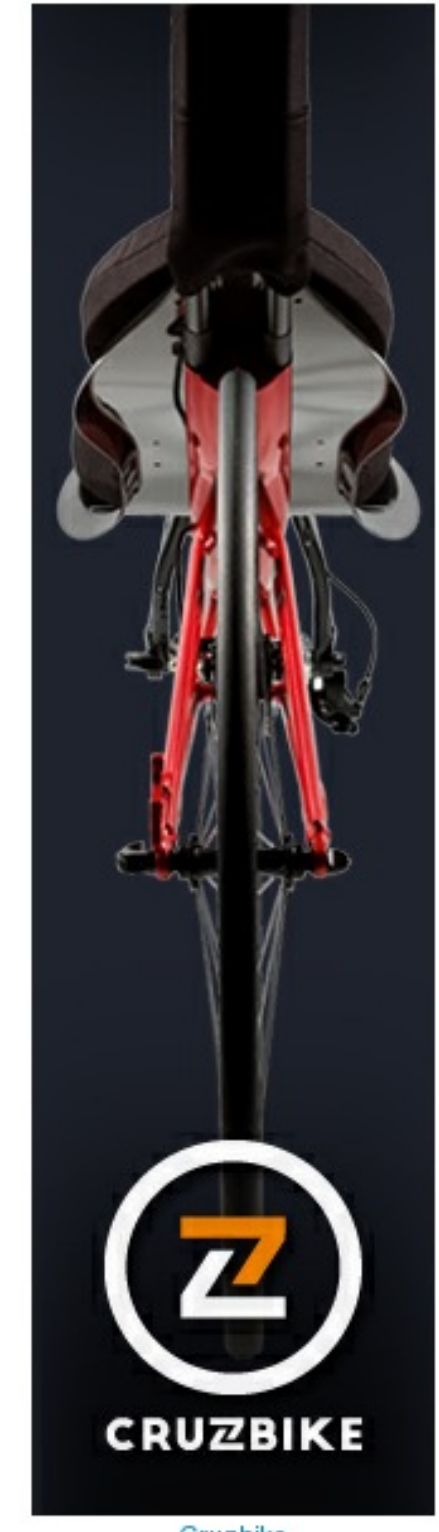


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Azub Max

Posted on January 29, 2012 by Bryan Ball



By **BRYAN J. BALL**
Managing Editor

Azub is a fairly well known manufacturer in Europe. They started out building low cost bikes several years ago. Over those years, the company has expanded and now builds a wide range of bikes and trikes in several price ranges. They've worked long and hard and have built themselves a very good reputation overseas.

Azub isn't exactly a household name in the United States but that may be changing. They recently made a promotional swing through the USA that added several new dealers and their trikes are especially getting a lot of interest. This review is going to focus on one their two wheeled offerings: the dual big wheel Azub Max.

This isn't my first experience with the Max. When I lived in Germany, I reviewed several of Azub's bikes and even commuted daily on an Azub 4 for over a year. At about that same time (Spring 2005), Azub sent us a Max to review.

The Max I rode seven years ago bears little resemblance to the bike sitting in my office today. Yes they both have two large wheels, the seat height on both is fairly similar and both bikes have aluminum frames. Beyond that, they are worlds apart.

The most obvious visual change is the radically shaped rear swingarm. The days of a simple Optima-style cantilever are gone. Newer design (shared with the Azub 5) features a higher pivot and a more horizontal offset shock placement. It also has an abundance of very slick asymmetrical curves. It is truly a thing of beauty. Fortunately, it also works fairly well. The Azub rear suspension isn't as plush as an HPVelotechnik but it does suck up every bump it needs to and didn't bob up and down a bit while climbing.

I rode a few examples of the Max for this review but the one I spent the most time on was a rear suspension base model. The matte red finish on this bike was great and really fit its personality. The welds and all of the machine work were impeccable. The Max definitely looks like a bike that can survive just about anything.

Azub has picked up several new dealers this year and the component packages will probably vary widely from dealer to dealer. Some are ordering complete bikes from Azub and some are building up from framekits. Therefore, I won't get into the individual component details very much here. The weight of the average Max build is probably going to be around 36-40 pounds. Not a featherweight but quite comparable to the few other bikes in this class.

Many dual 26" recumbents are fairly difficult for shorter riders to manage but the Max has a very swoopy frame that makes it fairly accessible. Anyone over 5'6" or so shouldn't have a major issue (there is a 24" version for shorter riders). All Azub bikes and trikes are adjustable in almost every possible way. The "IPS" (Ideal Position System) seat adjusts in height, angle and fore/aft. The boom also adjusts in the conventional manner. This not only allows you to be comfortable on the bike, it also helps make sure that the weight and balance is centered as close to 50/50 front and rear as it can be. It's a very well designed system and is especially important on a bike that's designed to operate on a wide variety of surfaces.

I can assure you that I can definitely vouch for the veracity of that last sentence... I definitely rode the Max on a very "wide variety of surfaces." I rode the Max in its many guises on the road, on bike paths, on city streets, on dirt roads and even on some single track mountain bike paths. It performed with aplomb on any terrain I could throw at it. My first test ride on the Max was a wide mix of all of these surfaces and I was grinning like an idiot when I got home. While the Max began life as an off-road 'bent it is so sure-footed and so capable of rolling over most obstacles that it almost makes me sympathize for people who drive Hummer H2 SUV's to Macy's. Almost...

I'm sure you'd all like me to expand further upon that last statement...

On the road, the Max is a very capable tourer or commuter. It's not a blazingly fast bike but it can hold its own. The big wheels roll along nicely and its curb weight is a bit lower than most of the competition. The suspension is also very efficient. With the rigid front fork and the right tires, it's actually pretty quick for a touring bike. The Max's handling is very good at a walking pace or at higher speeds. The same holds true for dirt and/or gravel roads.

Taking the Max into true off-road situations is a very fun experience. Being up that high in the air whilst carving between trees and over rocks takes a bit of getting used to, but once you do you can't help but smile. I'm a former semi-pro level mountain bike racer and I can't in good conscience tell you that the Max is ready for a World Cup MTB Downhill course (it probably can't even handle the average NORBA Cross Country Course) but on mild single track the Max is a very capable machine. It's easily one of the best off-road recumbents I've ever ridden.

As I mentioned above, the Max is very adjustable. The seat angle range is a bit wider than most other Euro-touring 'bents but at 23-40 degrees it is still going to be more laid back than its American mesh seat counterparts. Other than that, I found Azub's seat to be supportive and just wide enough without getting in the way. This is especially nice off-road. The Azub's bottom bracket height isn't extreme and the handlebar position on our USS test bike was great. The Max definitely has all-day comfort.

That's a very good thing because the average Max owner will probably use it. The Max can be set up straight from the dealer with everything you'd need for a serious expedition tour to... well... anywhere with anything better than a goat path. As I said before, it handles great on and off pavement and you can order it with racks that can carry four panniers. You can also get full fenders, disc brakes, a Rohloff hub or just about anything else you can dream up. It really is one of the best bikes out there for truly silly adventures.

The Max isn't perfect. After import duty and what not, it's not really a bargain. Also, the rear rack carries the panniers up pretty high and pretty far back for my tastes unless you opt for the Expedition Rack. But my largest complaint about the Max it's probably that it's perhaps a bit overkill for the average rider. If you're going to be mostly riding on the road, this is probably more bike than you need. I very much enjoyed riding the Max on the road but part of me always pined for a lighter weight version with less suspension travel or something.

I have a feeling that I'll prove to be in the minority on that last point. Most of Azub's target audience likes their machines precisely because they are built to handle anything you can throw at them. Take that well deserved reputation and add in a growing and robust dealer network, and you have a pretty formidable combination.

AZUB MAX

Highs – Great handling on any surface, Great suspension, Excellent build quality

Lows – Maybe a bit overbuilt for some use

MSRP – Starting at about \$3000 USD

More Info – <http://www.azub.cz>



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