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Volae

AZUB TI-FLY 26 Posted on August 16, 2016 by Bryan Ball



By BRYAN J. BALL Managing Editor AZUB Recumbents out of the Czech Republic has undoubtably become a major player in the recumbent trike market over the last few years. Their slick folding mechanism, highly adjustable fit system, excellent handling and overall fit and finish have earned them a lot of fans. However, there was always one thing that AZUB never offered that many other trike manufacturers have been

selling lots of for years. Full suspension. Customers asked them when they'd see a full suspension AZUB and they were coy. When I asked, all I was told was, "We're working on something really cool and want to get it right." And take their time, they did. AZUB spent over three and a half years developing their new

baby. This "really cool" trike is finally upon us in the form of the radical new AZUB Ti-FLY. Now that it's out, I can admit that I did see some photos of it on an AZUB employee's phone at Recumbent Cycle-Con last year. My immediate response was, "Holy crap!" (I probably didn't say crap.) Now that I've put a couple hundred miles on one, my response is exactly the same. The rear half of the Ti-FLY will look familiar to most AZUB fans. It's basically the same as a TRIcon 26. The front half is where things get a bit crazy and give the Ti-FLY its name.

Instead of using some sort of shock mounted in near the kingpin like most trike manufacturers do, AZUB's designers decided to turn the Ti-FLY's entire cruciform into a pair aerospace-grade titanium leaf springs. The overall look of the Ti-FLY is quite dramatic. Even the most cursory glance tells you that something very interesting is going on here. In the bike industry, powdercoating or anodizing titanium is a cardinal sin. Anything made out of the holy metal should be out there in all its

glory for the world to see. The AZUB's leaf springs hold to this rule. The pair of CNCmachined plates dominate the look of the trike and proudly display an "Aerospace

TITANIUM Grade 5" label. The rest of the trike doesn't let the exotic front end down. As I said, the rest of the Ti-FLY looks like any other AZUB trike, but that's pretty high praise. All of the company's trikes are very well-finished, fairly exotic looking in their own right and stoutly built. They also have many small details and features that encourage you to examine them for hours trying to find new little details you missed before. All of the quick releases are milled aluminum and red so that they're easy to find. The CNC-machined main folding hinge is a work of art and looks strong enough to survive a bomb blast. In fact, the entire trike just looks tough and readyfor-anything without coming off as overly industrial. And this one also has all of that titanium

AZUB offers basically any color or combination of colors you can think of. I went simple with the Ti-FLY and ordered it in a very convincing shade of BentRider Blue (not what AZUB calls it) and AZUB added a bunch of their usual red accents. The overall effect is very pleasing and just a bit flashy without being too overpowering. There's a staggering amount of factory component options on all of AZUB's bikes and trikes. Everything from a basic 24-speed set-up to a full-blown 18-speed Pinion gearbox are

available. There are also a wide variety of brake options from two sizes of drum brakes to

to drool over! (Don't worry. Titanium doesn't rust.)

mechanical or hydraulic discs.

those extra three gears.

available.

23" apart stock.

to distract you from your ride.

helps the Ti-FLY to corner very flatly with little "body roll."

My Ti-FLY was equipped with one of AZUB's more middle-of-the-road component specifications. The entire drivetrain including the shifters, derailleurs and crankset are Shimano Deore 27-speed. AZUB is very fond of Shimano's "Rapidfire" shifters and most of their bikes and trikes come with them. They've used them for years and have developed a way of mounting them that works extremely well. The shifters are very intuitive to operate and sit in a very natural position. It's been awhile since I used Deore components and I have to admit that, even though they're supposed to be from one of Shimano's mid-tier grouppos, I was pretty impressed with them. The rear derailleur is all metal and very pleasing to look at. Everything in the drivetrain felt very well made and worked superbly. I

wouldn't pop for more expensive Shimano XT option unless you're just looking for bling or

Despite the Ti-FLY's exotic looks, this is intended to be a touring trike at its core. I was

happy to see that AZUB chose gearing appropriate to this task. The rear cassette is a wide-

range 11-34 and the front chainrings are 48-36-26 rather than the larger 52-42-30 road gears you find on a lot of stock trikes. With my test trike's 26" rear wheel this yielded a gear range of 19-108 gear inches. The Ti-FLY is available with drum brakes or hydraulic disc brakes but my tester came with the ever-present Avid BB-7 mechanical disc brakes. I have no complaints there. The front wheels come with Schwalbe Tryker tires and the rear is a Schwalbe Marathon Racer. This is

becoming the de-facto tire set-up for most European 26/20 trikes.

own very pretty front hubs. The rear hub is where things get interesting. Rather than a conventional 135mm rear hub and quick release, AZUB has chosen a 157mm wide Syntace rear hub with a thick through-axle design. The wheel removes with an allen key that's stored inside the axle. In practice, it's no more difficult to remove and install than a conventional quick release. They did this to address a frequent complaint amongst recumbent riders that trikes with larger drivewheels often suffer from wheel flex when cornering. I admit that I've always considered the whole wheel flex issue to be a bit overblown, but I

absolutely could feel a difference on the AZUB. When really leaning into a corner the rear feels just a bit more solid than the other 26" drivewheel trike that I have on hand to compare

it to. There was an almost complete lack of that small amount of rear-end wiggle that I

The wheels themselves are custom built for AZUB with Remerx Fast Disc rims and AZUB's

sometimes feel on other 26" or 700C trikes. I would stop just short of calling the difference "dramatic" but its noticeable enough that I could definitely feel it right away and it did give me more confidence at the limits. Now back to that suspension... Does AZUB's fancy new front suspension system work? In a word, YES! It absorbs bumps very well indeed and didn't upset the trike's handing in the least. A pair of hydraulic front dampers are installed at angles between the Ti6Al4V (the technical term for the titanium that AZUB uses) leaf springs to prevent any pogo when

pedaling and help eliminate suspension dive when braking. They work very well. There's 1.6"

of very well-metered travel which is plenty for most road and dirt trail use. Multiple plate choices are available for lighter or heavier riders to tune the suspension to their liking.

One of the things I liked most about AZUB's system is that when I tried to do truly stupid things with it and overtaxed the front suspension, there wasn't a hard "bump" when it bottomed out. It was a much more gentle feel when it ran out of travel. There's no solid bang of metal on metal. It just sort of stopped moving without any real drama.

The overall feel of the Ti-FLY's front suspension is somewhere between that of ICE's sporty elastomer-based 1.6" of travel and HP Velotechnik's cushier 2.4" of spring and elastomer

travel. It has the same amount of travel as the ICE but feels a bit more active while not being quite as active and luxurious as the HP Velotechnik system. With its hydraulic dampers, the Ti-FLY's system is very efficient while climbing and sprinting. In those situations, it's similar to the ICE and pogos and less than HP Velotechnik set-up. The Ti-FLY's rear suspension keeps up well. It's the same system you'll find on the TRI-

Con and it works very well. My test trike came with the basic DNM DV 22 shock but even with that, it had plenty of travel and was very efficient. Two different optional air shocks are

The overall riding position of the Ti-FLY is pretty similar to that of the TRIcon. The seat height is 12 inches. The bottom bracket is about five inches higher than the seat which is a bit sporty but it didn't cause me any issues with numb feet. The leaf springs are swept back so getting on and off of the Ti-FLY is pretty easy. AZUB's IPS (Individual Positioning System) allows you to adjust both the seat and the boom so that it's easy to get the weight

distribution just right. The handlebars are also adjustable for angle but not for width. They're

AZUB's seat is adjustable between 34 and 52 degrees. The seat itself is an inch or two narrower than ICE, HP Velotechnik or Catrike but I can't say I noticed any difference switching between trikes. I did very much like the shape of it and found the mesh to be very breathable and comfortable. In short, the Ti-FLY is just as comfortable as any of AZUB's other already-great trikes with

the added advantage of full suspension. There isn't really even any chain noise to speak of

One of my favorite things about AZUB trikes has always been their handling. I was a bit worried that the new-fangled suspension may ruin one of the sweetest handling trikes on the planet. I'm happy to say that it didn't. It doesn't feel quite as sharp as its unsuspended stablemates but it's at least 95% of the way there. This can be said for every fullsuspension trike I've ridden when compared to their rigid counterparts. The "selfstabilization" effect of the titanium leaf springs act as a sort of natural anti-roll bar. This

The steering is light without being twitchy and the Ti-FLY is rock solid at speed. Even over bumps. There's no brake steer to speak of and no pedal steer at all. In fact, its one of the few trikes I can pedal with my hands off the bars and still maintain a straight line. The turning circle wasn't as tight as the TRIcon but still very acceptable. My test trike weighed in at just a bit under 42 lbs with pedals and no rack or fenders

installed. That's pretty light for a full-suspension trike. It would be a bit heavier with the drum brakes and more basic components and a bit lighter with the XT-level parts. By comparison,

my similarly-equipped HP Velotechnik Scorpion fs 26 weighed close to 48 lbs and the ICE Sprint 26 fs and Adventure 26 fs twins are both right around 40 pounds with mesh seats and pedals. If you went crazy with the options, it's not impossible to think that the Ti-FLY could crack the 40 lb barrier. The comparatively low weight is nice, but that's really not what this trike is about. When most Ti-FLY buyer's are ticking boxes on the option sheet, they'll be adding weight rather than taking it away. AZUB has always been all about the touring market and the Ti-FLY is

no exception. There are a wide array of racks, fenders and other options that would make the Ti-FLY an excellent long-distance touring trike. If you're out in the middle of nowhere, it's

also reassuring to know that the front suspension actually has very few moving parts. There isn't a lot to go wrong up front. Even though it's a touring trike, the Ti-FLY is pretty quick for a full-suspension tourer. The seating position is fairly aerodynamic and the lower weight is noticeable. I can't really compare it to an ICE Sprint 26 fs because the one I have here has the hardshell seat and all of the go-fast bits. I can say that it's at least as fast as the HP Velotechnik fs 26 on the

One of the best things that the Ti-FLY shares with the TRIcon is its fold. It's very intuitive and folds down into a very small package. There's probably not a car trunk anywhere this side of a Porsche that it won't fit into with a few minutes work. If you're an international traveler, it fits into AZUB's TRIcon carry bag or handy trailer (or an oversize airline box) and a wheel bag without too much effort.

And now for the downside... The price. The Ti-FLY starts at about \$5200 and the extras

flats and is noticeably quicker on the climbs and when sprinting or accelerating.

don't come cheap. With our fairly modest options, the price climbed to \$6373 and I still haven't ordered racks or fenders for it. An HP Velotechnik Scorpion fs 26 starts at \$4699 and ICE Sprint 26 fs starts at about \$4400. All that titanium and extra tech doesn't come cheap. It's easy to argue that it's worth the extra price because of all the technology, smaller folding size and larger choice of factory colors and options but that's up to the buyer. Of all the trikes I compared the Ti-FLY to in this review, it's impossible to find a bad one. I think the best way to sum up the Ti-FLY is by pointing out the length of this review. On

average, my trike reviews are around 1500-1800 words. This one is close to 2500. There's just so much to talk about with this trike. It's loaded with innovations and all of them work and work well. No, it isn't cheap but can you really put a price on being able to look down and see the somewhat-intoxicating image of your fancy titanium suspension moving up and down as you ride along? If you can get past the price and lay down the card to get one, you'll wind up with a machine that's impressive in many ways. AZUB TI-FLY

Suberb build quality

Lows - The cost of entry

MSRP – Starting at \$5208

More info – http://www.azub.eu, http://www.azub.eu/ti-fly

Highs – Many innovations that really work, Great suspension, Great handling, Small fold,

















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