



Read. Ride. Have fun.

The Book for Recumbent Riders



A catalogue or a book?

Every time we decide to prepare a new catalogue, we ask ourselves whether there is a need to print a paper catalogue in this Internet age. People can find exactly the same information there as they can on our website. And what is more, information tends to cease being up to date almost on the same day it appears on paper. We actually wonder what percentage of people who buy bikes from us every year really had the catalogue in their hands.

But then we think of all the trade fairs and all those people whose eyes sparkle when they are handed a nice big interesting catalogue. What can we say, paper is paper. You can read it in bed, you can take it on a plane, or even leaf through it whilst on the toilet. Why not? We don't worry about that. The paper we use is too hard :-)

So we set out to create a publication that would be more like a book rather than a catalogue. On the following pages, you will find many articles that you won't actually find on our website. Instead of lots of details about individual bikes, countless studio photos and information about all the different accessories and ordering options for our bikes, you will have a chance to read about the history of AZUB, about where we are headed and why we in fact enjoy living our lives surrounded by recumbents. Our main concern is for you to have fun with this book, to experience something that a flat and cold screen of a monitor, tablet or mobile cannot give you.

You will find an overview of our models and the most important technical specifications in the attached Mini catalogue, but the main information about our current offer, technical details and features that are currently used on our bikes can be found on our website.

So, enjoy this catalogue and visit our website. And in both cases, await the unexpected.

Thanks for the time you devote to our bikes!

Your AZUB team

Enjoy our catalogue to the full

The so called QR codes are popping up everywhere around us as well as in our catalogue more and more often. They are the squares made up of lots of tiny squares. In our catalogue they are there for you to scan them with your smartphone or tablet and play the video that the code is hiding. It is a kind of a connection of a printed word and the Internet. So for example, you can lie in bed, browse through the catalogue and at the same time watch the best of the best videos on your mobile. But the QR code may also be hiding a lot more information.

How to use a QR code?

For those who don't know how to do it yet. You have to install an application into your mobile device. Put the keyword "QR scanner" in Google Play or App Store and choose the right application for you. For example, we can recommend the "Scan - QR Code and Barcode Reader". Then you just need to install the application, open it and start having lots of fun!

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International recumbents meeting

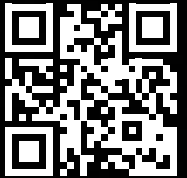
In the Czech Republic, several meets of recumbent bikes and other unconventional pedal-powered vehicles are organized every year. Some of them are quite small and one is rather large. This one is held in different places around the country and each time it's organized by someone else. After all, to prepare a programme for 100 to 150 people is no easy task, especially if you take into account that organizing such a meeting is done on a strictly voluntary basis. Every five years, on the occasion of its fifth anniversary, AZUB itself organizes the meet. Because of this, in 2005, 2010 and 2015 a large group of recumbenters took part in the nearby village of Nivnice.

It is absolutely amazing to see all those smiling faces, so many company-built, as well as such a vast number of home-built recumbent bikes and trikes in ordinary, strange, and even downright odd designs. And then there are of course the group trips, the night ride full of lights and loud music, slide shows, chats over a beer or long debates over various technical solutions and concepts concerning recumbents.

Again in 2020

In 2015, more than 150 of us got together in Uherský Brod and we enjoyed four great days together with a bonus of a three day pre-meeting tour from Prague. So we are more than looking forward to the next meeting that we will be organizing for you, probably once again in Nivnice. It will most likely be held in September 2020. Since it will be the 20th anniversary of AZUB's existence, one can expect it to be a real blast. You are all wholeheartedly welcome!

Watch the video

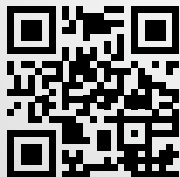


From the cheapest to premium

When Aleš Zemánek started constructing and assembling his first recumbent bikes in his former boyhood room, he was even then trying to achieve maximum functionality and quality that his resources and available technology offered. On the Czech market, the price was acceptable, and for the entire western world it was, rather than anything else, cheap. We need to remember that Aleš started four years before the Czech Republic joined the European Union and with each shipment abroad there was the hassle with customs documents and other bureaucracy. On the one hand, the low price was an obvious advantage, on the other hand it posed a significant problem, as our bikes were regarded as a cheap brand of recumbents from Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, over the years we have proved that the Czech engineering and industrial tradition that gave the world brands such as Tatra, Škoda, Česká zbrojovka, Jawa or Baťa has carried on through to the next generation and that the skill and the feel for high quality manufacturing has also been reflected in a small company in Uherský Brod, called AZUB. Gradually, the properties of our bikes improved dramatically. At the end of 2015, after fifteen years of hard work, our AZUB TRIcon 26 model was awarded the prestigious prize, the "Trike of the year" by the website Bentrider.bike (formerly Bentrideronline.com). It was the best gift ever for our fifteenth birthday which has definitely ranked us among the elite of recumbent manufacturers.

History continues



Aleš Zemánek builds his first truly customized recumbent with the idea for its future commercial production.



1999



2001
-
2005

2000



The founding of the company, first three AZUB recumbents leave the company to serve their new owners.

2002



First exhibition at the world famous SPEZI show in Gernersheim, Germany and also true entry to German and other foreign markets.

Several evolutions of one model named AZUB 2000, 2001, 3, 4. This model with 20/26" configuration is still a part of AZUB's range and is called AZUB SIX now. That said, every major evolution in the whole bike range is celebrated with a new sequential number in the name of that particular model.

The second model called MAX. It was developed and built according to the customer's requirement for just big wheels. So there it was. A dual 26" recumbent bike.



2005

AZUB Mini added to our range.



2007

We took a little step back and introduced a new line of recumbents called the Mainstream line. Those bikes have a simple single stay rear fork again, with just sliding bearings in the rear fork axle assembly and some other, let's say cheaper, technical solutions to make the price a bit more acceptable. Still, those bikes have been taken on several hardcore expeditions to South America and Asia and their riders love them.



2008

First AZUB trike called AZUB ECO, introduced at the SPEZI show. This model was renamed aTRIKE in 2014 and subsequently cancelled in 2015.



2010

More than seven years after the first prototype of AZUB TWIN was built, we started building it to order. It soon became a synonym for durable and strong tandem with both riders pedalling in truly recumbent positions. Several of them have travelled serious distances during long expeditions.



2011

AZUB Origami added to our line of recumbent bikes. A folder which uses the same super stable frame geometry as AZUB ECO 20". People like it for travelling as well as commuting.



2012

The hungriest model added to our range. Yes, you are right. The AZUB FAT trike.



2015

Quo vadis, recumbent?

At one time or another, each manufacturer of recumbents must ask himself this question. Over the past decade, the world of reclining bikes has turned its focus from two-wheel vehicles to three-wheeled devices. And because of this, they have become much more popular. Soon tricycles began sporting rear suspension, then they received folding mechanisms, and later still came 26" rear wheels and front suspension. What next? Trikes with all three wheels in 26"? Or the so called delta trikes with two wheels in the front or with two wheels in the back? Quadbikes? What about the practical electric velomobiles? And two-wheel bicycles, what about them? Will they really become a thing of the past? Here in AZUB we hope not, because we all see that they do have their place and hope that as much as recumbent riders were excited about the new trike trend, the situation will turn once again. So people who like trikes will fancy trying out recumbents and find that they too have their obvious uses and advantages.

Unleash your imagination and become a part of AZUB's future. Take our survey and let us know the direction you would take.

Many, many thanks!

Future

2006



Asymmetrical rear fork with improved stiffness, lower weight and greater performance introduced at the beginning of the year. Many other improvements to production and further development of the IPS system for easier adjustment of our bikes. The name of the core AZUB 4 model changed to AZUB 5.

2007 - 2009



Cooperation between AZUB and Australian trike producer Greenspeed regarding assembling trikes for Europe.

2009



ECO 20" and ECO 16" were our projects of affordable good quality recumbent bikes mainly for eastern European countries like Czech, Poland, Hungary or even Ukraine, but sold also in France and Germany and known as one of the most stable recumbents available on the market. Three years later we realized the price crept up too much and a decision to redesign it was made. We added a folding hinge and created a truly folding recumbent called Origami.

2011



Just one year after the ECO trike we introduced two other trike models. Folding T-Tris with the same frame as the ECO, but with added folding hinge and folding handlebars, and also the TRIcon with not only the folding hinge, but also rear suspension and a trailer/case into which you can fold the complete trike for transporting and then use it as a trailer when travelling.

2011



We officially entered the US market by exhibiting at the first ever Recumbent Cycle-Con show in Los Angeles. We rode a car with three bikes from New York all the way to Los Angeles to visit over 10 recumbent dealers on the way.

2013



We redesigned and improved all our bikes, introduced new under seat steering on the Mainstream Line and the Top Line bikes, and all bikes got a sliding seat bracket in the standard set up. The AZUB 5 was renamed AZUB SIX to show and confirm the next big step.

2015



After three years of building TRIcon and T-Tris trikes, we decided to take another step forward. Customers' hunger for larger rear wheels made us spend long weeks working on the design and testing of prototypes. Finally, we managed to combine the great riding characteristics of our 20" models with the advantages of 26" rear wheel. The TRIcon 26 and T-Tris 26 were launched.

Be part of AZUB future





Uherský Brod

The town where our company is based is more than just our workplace. Uherský Brod (in English Hungarian Ford) lies in the east of the Czech Republic, just a stone's throw away from the border with Slovakia. The region where we work and live is called Slovácko. Among Czechs, it is famous for its friendliness, pleasant and hospitable people, vineyards, good wine and plum brandy. Having good relations still matters to local people and although money is discussed too, it isn't as big a deal as it is in Prague. Life here, in the rolling countryside is a bit slower, tailbacks are shorter and celebrations more traditional. And cycle paths? We have more of them than anywhere else in the country.

Come and see for yourself, go on a bike ride and experience the local folklore.



AZUB team

The most important member of the company is neither the owner, nor the sales person or the mechanic, the heart of the whole company is everybody. The whole team. And the team must work as one man. We humans sometimes suffer from aches and pains here and there and now and again, something rubs the wrong way in our bodies or minds. Our AZUB team also occasionally grapples with minor disputes, but overall, things are running pretty smoothly. One proof of the relaxed atmosphere is also the fact that in more than fifteen years in the history of the company only three people left and everyone here has a chance to find the position that really suits them.

This photo of us was taken on the 4th of April 2016, but still there are some people missing, those who help us during the busiest season.

And in a few months there will probably be even more of us. Anyway, here we are, with smiles on our faces, ready to create the best recumbent bikes in the world just for you. The number indicates the year we joined this fantastic team.



Roman Procházka
Czech Sales
2015

Pavel Švestka
Warehouseman
2015

Tomáš Gayer
Designer
2010

Aleš Zemánek
Founder, CEO
2000

Lad'a Zemánek
Mechanic
2003

Ondra Sopůšek
Mechanic
2012

Petr Hebeda
Czech Sales
2010

Patrik Ištók
International Sales
2015

Milan Čtvrtník
Production Manager
2013

Libor Zemánek
Supply
2008

Honza Galla
Sales Manager
Marketing Manager
2005

Andrea Výstupová
Bookkeeper
2013

Miro Ozímý
Mechanic
2009

Marek Liška
Marketing & Media
2015

Karel Šebela
Finance
2011

The beginnings and the future - The story of Aleš

Childhood, hobbies and beloved travelling

I grew up as the youngest of four children in a practicing Christian family. Mum worked as a teacher in a primary school, dad was a turner in the tool making workshop in Česká zbrojovka.

From my mum I learned about the humanities and from my dad I learned to love manual work and all things technical. Like any other average boy, my childhood was divided into periods of cars, cycling, football, etc. However, from the age of about 4 until I was 20 I spent an awful lot of time sketching various designs of cars, including the interiors. This car obsession also saw me sending letters to European car manufacturers, asking for catalogues and photographs. So, when during the times of deep totalitarianism Porsche, Audi or BMW covers started appearing in our letterbox, I saw the evidence of “where there is a will, there is a way” for the first time.

The cycling period was connected to the lack of children's bicycles on the Czechoslovakian market and a long wait for my dream BMX bike. One fine day my name appeared at the top of the waiting list, effectively ending my football career, and I began spending all my free time on it. I even took part in an official BMX race, but the greatest pleasure for me and my friends was building our own tracks, measuring the length of our jumps and tuning up our darlings. With my dad we would then go on cycling trips, either doing the usual 24 km long circuit with a limit of one hour, or cycling further afield to pilgrimage sites.

It was somewhere around there where the “modern” hobby of travelling began, travelling connected with exploring the outdoors, towns and people. And this hobby is still with me today. Even so, bicycle touring is rather an exception for me. I prefer a backpack to

a suitcase, a tent to a hotel and hitchhiking to flying. My most adventurous journey so far began with a crazy idea to travel on land to the Aswan Dam in southern Egypt. In the “pre-Internet” time, without any real information and with no financial security, it was a wonderful life's lesson that brought me many beautiful as well as difficult moments. I learnt that one's happiness is a subjective notion and that friendly people willing to help can be found everywhere. Since then I have felt an affinity with the Middle East. I follow events in my beloved Syria with bitterness, I love Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Armenia, Oman but also many other, more or less exotic countries.

I mustn't forget the hobby that also brings me moments of relaxation and contentment – music. Especially the kind of music outside the mainstream, blues, jazz, bluegrass, fusion... My most favourite interpreters include Leonard Cohen, Paul Millns, Wanda Johnson... From Czech it is Traband, Jitka Šuranská, Druhá Tráva and others.

Me and my siblings

As I was the youngest of four children (my sister is 11 years older, one brother is 13 years older and one 15 years older), I can safely say that my childhood was also influenced by their generation. Whether they liked it or not, they often had to take me with them to concerts, rallies, or other sporting events. And their activities were so amazingly varied. I used to play with each one of them in different ways. My sister loves music and plays the piano beautifully, with one brother we indulged in “fooling around”, challenged ourselves to endless duels in table hockey and for many, many years we used to “smuggle” ourselves to the Brno motorcycle Grand Prix. And with my oldest brother, Lad'a,



we actually closed the circle. It was him I first watched making models and building his own skateboards. Eventually, he became my first employee and he is still a pillar in the assembly sector, the person who can give the best eyewitness account of each and every one of AZUB models.

AZUB is born

Actually, AZUB was conceived long before I saw my first recumbent bike, thanks to the right influence of my parents, siblings and other people. All of that created a concoction of personality traits and abilities. Then all it took was a single impulse and things

took off. Literally. My enchantment with recumbent bikes came as a bolt from the blue. While travelling in Norway, I spotted from the window something extravagant looking and moving pretty fast. The image remained stored in my memory and when after about a month I was leafing through the Peloton magazine, it suddenly came to me again. It was a recumbent bike. In that issue, the magazine published an article about a German recumbent bike called Radius (the brand does not exist anymore) and it triggered my quest to find out more about recumbents. The year was 1997, the Internet was not as omniscient as we know it today, so I had no choice but to follow any trail available. And that turned out to be the legendary Czech suspension fork, Kangaroo, which this Radius bike used. Through Kangaroo's owner, Mr. Novotný, I got another tip which was: „Nakládal from Brno“. And so I opened the Brno phonebook and called all the men whose surname was Nakládal. It was a success. I managed to track down the man who can be considered the modern

Czech "revivalist" of recumbent bikes. He built several recumbents out of square metal tubes in the most common European concept – with a 20" front wheel and

28" rear wheel. We arranged for him to build a frame for me, which was ready after a few weeks. In the meantime, I read up on recumbents as much as I could, so before applying the final coat, I cut up and re-welded the frame several times until it was in a shape I then thought optimal.

At that time I was working as a CNC operator in Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod, I lived my life with all its inevitable joys and difficulties. Sometimes I would set off on an adventure, and, of course, I spent almost every weekend on my recumbent. Gradually, the idea to make my own frame formed in my head. In 1999, I holed myself up in my room for several nights and began drawing the "ideal" frame. Then I spent a few weeks in the cellar, cutting, sanding and welding. The result was a model subsequently designated AZUB 0 (zero), the grandfather of all AZUB recumbents. Many ideas used in this recumbent bike can still be seen on current models. By the way, this bike, as well as Mr. Nakládal's frame, is still roadworthy today. And above all, I experienced the intense feeling of delight from creating something tangible and functional. What six months ago had been in my head, a month ago on paper and a week ago in the welder's hands suddenly came to life. Each cut and weld was done by my own hands.

That feeling made me believe that it would be a shame to have just that one frame, that there must be many more people who were charmed by recumbent bikes.

Incredible Internet

The year was 2000, I was feeling elated

having the first recumbent that was really mine, delighted with the work that led to it, and I longed to repeat it and also experience what it would be like to build two or three frames at once. But at the same time, I hardly had any output. How could I let people know that my recumbents existed? Fortunately, my friends came to the rescue and created a website for me. It was launched just at the beginning of the cycling season and a few days after, Seznam.cz (Czech Google) noticed some "strange bikes". Seznam.cz put up azub.cz on its homepage recommending it as an interesting website and a few days later three orders arrived. One came from Opočno and two from Harrachov. I felt like my first hard times began. It no longer meant building a bike just for fun with no fixed deadline, it was a customer/supplier relationship. And such a liaison should be built on certain moral principles. Fortunately for AZUB's future, I felt that was the right way even then. That one cannot budge from Bata's principles under any circumstances. So, the old familiar Bata's statements, such as "Our customer – Our master", or "Good business is business where all involved are happy", have accompanied AZUB literally from the very first bicycle.

In retrospect, I can see that adhering to these principles is the most important thing for the growth of an internally healthy company.

Time and money

Why manufacture recumbents? Why manufacture anything? Why run a business and not be an employee? Why not, one might say. I have nothing to lose. I will get time to travel (big laugh) and do something that is really fulfilling. Oh, and I'll be my own boss. And maybe I'll have more money than if I was employed. And it will definitely impress the girls - such were my first motivations. After the first year, only the feeling of fulfilment and the girls were left. That was enough for me to carry on. And the desire to improve was another driving force.

In the first years, it always took the whole winter to create a new model or redesign an existing one. They were the times when I could sit and pore over drawings, draw all the parts in detail, think everything through and connect it all together, whether it was the gradual development of the classic 20/26" series, or the development of the legendary AZUB MAX model with 26" wheels. And there would always be something to "better". I soaked up new information and saw how recumbents worked in Germany and the Netherlands where we used to go on our first sales trips. There always was something to improve.

Today, the development is based on projects. We usually know what we will be working on next year or the year after. Actually, we have more ideas and plans than we can possibly realize. A large team of people of various professions across the company are now involved in the development. It isn't just the marketer, whose view is important, but also the opinions of the sales people and assemblers. The final product must be not only beautiful and functional, but also easily serviceable, it must be easy to ship to the other side of the world, it must cope with the most challenging expeditions and it must be able to do lots of other more or less important things.

Today's motto: Be the bee's knees

I believe that the painful transition from a "one leader" company into a company where everybody has set competences and responsibilities has been successful. The joy of seeing people in their posts being the best experts in what they do is amazingly energizing. It gives me more space to concentrate on the development and look for better techniques not only regarding production but also other areas of business. I can see now that

before, the detached and "holistic" view of the AZUB company really was missing.

In short, we want to be the best manufacturer of recumbent bikes in the world, which certainly does not mean the biggest. I'm not saying these statements directly contradict each other, but to maintain our level of quality with a higher number of bikes produced is almost impossible. But it's a challenge. Quality shall always prevail over quantity. We want to change people's lives, to see the joy of their first successful ride on a recumbent. We want the dealers who sell our bikes to be happy working for us and selling our products.

Tour de Triumph

When I started, AZUB made extremely cheap recumbents. They were super cheap because I was starting from scratch with minimal input costs. I could not afford to use sophisticated technology. Step by step, we perfected the bikes, we began to use more modern

technologies, we were not afraid to implement complex but functional technical solutions. Because in the Czech Republic we produce smaller series, we are able to implement innovations and introduce new technologies faster than other brands. In most cases, they are dependent on Asian suppliers, which in turn means larger quantities, so their implementation of changes is much slower. Since 2000 we have come a long, long way and I dare say that today we rightfully belong among the premium brands. And we want to be even better. The best.

It is important for me to mention our employees, AZUB team members who spend days, weeks and whole years of their time



and life in the company. Employees who know what they are doing and why they are doing it form the foundation of every company. Little fluctuation means that ours is a stable and solid team. I am fortunate that recumbent bikes have their enthusiastic fans and that many of them work for AZUB. With regard to my employees, I prefer the so called soft power. For me, they are my colleagues and not "just" employees. Mostly, I care little about their formal education. For me, more important are the human factors and the willingness to learn new things. That's why there is a former joiner, professional soldier or even an operetta singer working here.

Philosophy and life

If you asked me about the philosophy of our company, I would prefer to answer with several of my own or borrowed sentences:

- Step by step.
- We do not make ordinary bikes, we make bicycles with a story. And we believe that our customers will carry on with this story.
- To be the customer's partner, not a rival.
- To Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

Company's philosophy usually includes a vision, which for me is more than clear. We want to make the best recumbents and use the best technologies while being able to undertake custom-made orders. We want to bring to the market not only the tried and tested solutions, but also visionary bikes.

Finally, a few words about what I like and dislike. My greatest joy is seeing the company working well, people pulling together and knowing more about their field of expertise than me. As for ordinary activities, I enjoy working on the development and the gradual birth of a new or an improved model.

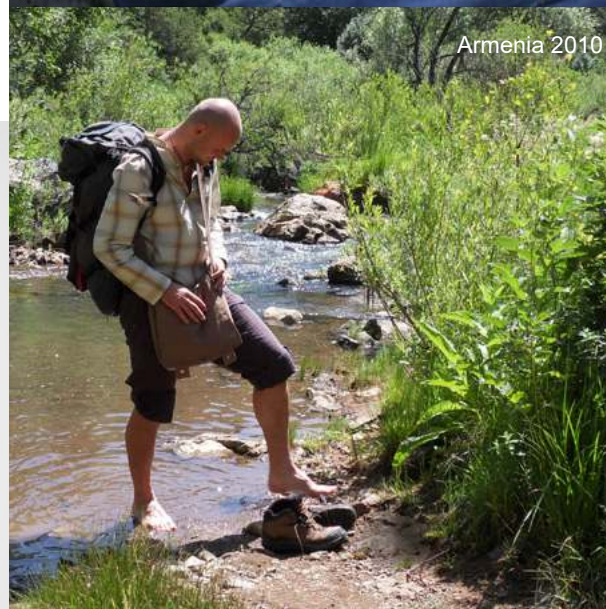
The hardest thing is to concentrate on repetitive tasks and not to underestimate the preparation for trade fairs, so that our presentation would always be 100%, even though, for example, we are going to SPEZI in Germany for the fifteenth time. Almost stereotypical. I also don't feel that great in a big company of people, I prefer to stay in the background. Having more people around me is stressful and I don't feel at ease. In this case, I rather prefer observing and supporting my team "from behind".

A.Z.U.B.

For all of you who still don't know what the word AZUB means – it's an acronym of the first letters of Aleš Zemánek Uherský Brod, which is the name of the company's owner and the town where our company is based. The inspiration for this name was the acronym CZUB, Česká Zbrojovka Uherský Brod, where Aleš worked for several years. He used the acronym AZUB for the first time when he opened his first email account. It went something like this: azub@email.cz. This email hasn't been in use for years, but when Aleš was founding his company, choosing its name was relatively simple. Only later he discovered that this choice was absolutely brilliant. The name is unique and the word itself does not mean anything. Therefore, when you search the Internet, you get only hits connected with our bikes and the name is generally easy to remember.




Aleš's wife Hanka and his sons Šimon (on the left) and Jakub (on the right)



Armenia 2010



Colorado Springs 2013



Miro Ozimý

In AZUB, my dream of a job becoming my hobby came true. To imagine that I get to take all those BionXs, Rohloffs, Pinions, NuVincis and other wonderful bits which people admire at exhibitions out of boxes and fit them on recumbents and trikes knowing people all over the world will enjoy them, is just great.

Roman Procházka

What I like about working in AZUB? It's obvious! It's never a routine. Every day when I go to work, something new is waiting for me. I never know if I'm going to be building a bike for a Canadian ironworks owner, or for a Slovakian lad who saved up for seven years to get it. Also, I really like the fact that all the guys in the workshop are kind of design engineers too, because when necessary, we put our heads together and solve the problem.

The birthplace

All our bicycles, tricycles and tandems are basically completely manufactured in the Czech Republic or Slovakia. Unfortunately, many of our rivals claim that their bikes are manufactured in Germany or in the UK, yet their frames and some component subassemblies are purchased in Taiwan and elsewhere in Asia. The actual frames of AZUB recumbents are prepared and welded at two different locations in the Czech Republic and many parts are produced in nearby villages. The same applies to the final finish. But for example the fibreglass and carbon seats for our two wheel bikes are made in Slovakia by a company that not only produces perhaps the most velomobile bodies in the world for a lot of different European manufacturers, but that also parts for ultralight aircraft.

The final assembly takes place right here, in Uherský Brod. As soon as we receive an unfinished frame, it goes through the first detailed inspection and is carefully deburred. Then it goes through sandblasting and final coating. When it returns onto the purely AZUB soil, it is once again thoroughly inspected and any irregularities in the paint finish mean that the frame must be stripped, re-blasted with fine sand and it must receive a new final coat. A superb paint finish is a priority for us, not only because you can choose from a large variety of standard colours, but through our Color Shop you can basically choose from a full range of RAL colours.

Then it comes to the final assembly which is done by one mechanic, from the first thread cleaning to putting together all the assemblies and over to the final test ride. It is therefore up to him to solve any minor or major issues with some special orders, and he himself is responsible for how well the bike is assembled. Therefore, each of our mechanics is duly proud of each bicycle that he puts together.

In addition, the people enjoy their work immensely, as each bike in AZUB is an original, only rarely it happens that two of the same bikes are made. And thanks to the huge selection of components, their variability and accessories, the mechanic must work meticulously, assembling it piece by piece like a puzzle that has been dreamed up and transformed into an order by one of AZUB's future recumbent riders.

What is more, despite having rules for assembling individual sets, be it brakes, cables, position of some accessories and similar, each bike also shows signs of the individual mechanic's signature. Here a different screw, there a different routing for cable housing, and so on. The mechanics are real humans who stand by their assemblies. After all, every person on the planet is different.

Finally comes the test ride, usually carried out by the mechanic himself. He will check the function of all components, check that individual parts are properly adjusted, and he will make sure the bike is quiet during riding and that there are no annoying screeches.

And then all is left to do is to carefully parcel up the bike and send it on to you.

Ondra Sopůšek

What I enjoy the most working in AZUB is the diversity, continuous development and improvement of our bikes. It feels good to build bikes that travel to faraway places, or which return disabled people their freedom of movement.

Lad'a Zemánek

What I like about my job is that our AZUB bikes and trikes bring happiness to people around the world. It's amazing to know all these places where people ride them.



See the picture moving

The great conquest

In 2011, our marketer, Honza Galla, set off with his dad, Honza Galla, on a 5500 mile (8800 km) long trip from New York to Los Angeles. Their goal was straightforward. They had fourteen days to visit as many stores specializing in the sale of recumbents, to fundamentally and in detail understand the rules of American recumbent market, to keep us informed about things and to have everything ready for the first Recumbent Cycle-Con in Los Angeles for the introduction of our brand on the US market. Their expedition was a success. Today, the United States are a country where the majority of AZUB recumbents are sold and where we have a lot of friends and awesome AZUB riders.

In the cold

In the middle of Siberia, in a town called Prokopyevsk, you will also find one of AZUB recumbent bikes. To be more precise, an AZUB MAX. In his home town, its owner is truly alone in his passion for recumbents. And because conditions in this part of the world are pretty tough for most of the year, we are very pleased that he has chosen a recumbent from us.

The tiny store

If you stop in Osaka in Japan, you can visit the smallest recumbent store in the world, HC WORKS. On an area of just a few square metres you will find several recumbents on display, including one tricycle, a service stand, a pile of accessories, and most importantly an experienced owner and recumbent rider, Yoshihiro Sainokami. Everything is laid out in the space-saving minimalist and ultra-modern Japanese style.

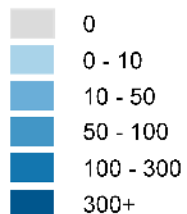
Off the beaten path

We don't know of a more secluded place in the world where recumbents are sold than the island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean. This island, a French overseas region, is just 2512 km² and has 800,000 inhabitants. One of them is also a passionate dealer of recumbents. If you happen to visit the island on your holiday, you can rent one of our trikes and explore this incredibly beautiful island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. www.atmospherepei.com

Pure exotics

Our recumbents are scattered all over the world. Not only in countries such as Tasmania, South Africa, Malaysia, or Dubai, but also in French Guiana. In a country known for its spaceport, launching rockets such as Ariane, Vega and Soyuz, there is one recumbent AZUB 5 roaming the local roads.

Homes of AZUB bikes



Discovering America

Around 2008, we began to feel a growing interest in our bikes from the United States and Canada. However, we were faced with complicated delivery, extremely expensive transport costs, problems with customs and duties, and host of other bureaucratic issues that generally spoiled things for a person who was eagerly awaiting his new bike. When we received an invitation to the first American recumbent fair called Recumbent Cycle-Con in the spring of 2011, the idea to "conquer" America began to take hold in our minds. But we felt that we wanted to provide the customers with the same service as in Europe, that we needed to know how things worked there, how business was done in America, what really were the differences between paying the American sales tax and European value added tax, what would be important for the American customer and what real advantage would our bikes bring. Visiting the show would have surely given us many answers, but we decided to do it our way. We ordered flight tickets to New York and rented a car which took us on a fourteen day tour across the United States.

On this long journey we visited more than 10 dealers. Wherever we arrived, it always took us nearly 20 minutes to dig out all three bikes out of the car and prepare them. Every time the dealers would ask about the price of our bikes, the time and method of delivery and other conditions, we would have to answer that we didn't know. We asked them to tell us about the common practice in the USA, what we would have to comply with, or how high the bar was raised for us to reach it in order to be as good as, or even better, than their best suppliers. We asked, we listened and we had long discussions with the rest of the team at home every day. From his office, Aleš would then negotiate the conditions for transport, look for the customs tariffs, recalculate prices and prepare everything so that we would be well ready for the LA show. And it worked out. We were able to hand out a complete price list and all other necessary information to all dealers including those we visited on our journey.

The journey was a revelation for us not only from the recumbent side of things, but also from a personal and travelling point of view. Neither I nor my dad had ever been to America before and we hadn't spent as much time together for a long time as we did on that journey. True, we did spend most of it sitting in the car with tiredness lurking about, but the need to be careful with money as well as our longing for adventure also led us to spend the nights in campsites or in the wild, and we got to have two half-days off during which we were able to make a trip to Pikes Peak and the Capitol Reef National Park. Basically, it was amazing three weeks full of lots of great experiences and most importantly full of great people that we met on our journey, businessmen, cyclists, park rangers and many others.

Since then we have been visiting USA every year. Our journeys are no longer voyages of exploration so much, but the pleasure of meeting with all the people who have become our friends, as well as the opportunity to improve everything we do following their suggestions, constantly motivate us to return again and again.

"I first heard about AZUB coming to the United States by a very simple e-mail from Honza with no logo or letterhead to the effect: 'We are visiting the US, would you like to see us'? To which I said 'yes.'

On an August day about a month later, Honza and his father Honza arrived in a Ford Focus sedan with a MAX, 5, and TRIcon along with their personal gear all inside! AZUB wanted to enter the US market and unlike others who do it the digital way, they flew into New York, rented the Focus and were driving across the country to Los Angeles to see what the country was like and to visit potential dealers.

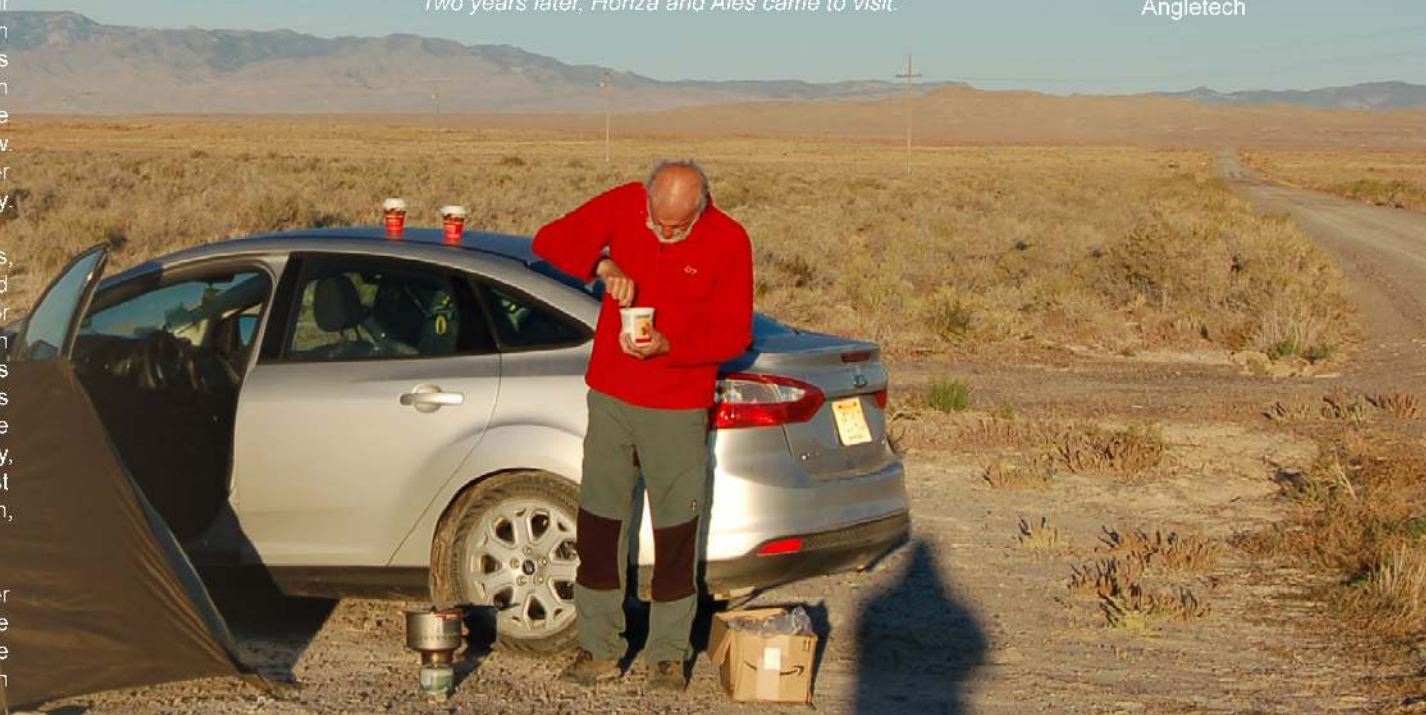
Myself, Allen, and Steve were here to greet them and we enjoyed the day together riding the cycles and talking about our recumbent experiences with each other. We were very impressed with the build quality of the cycles and the TRIcon's different but positive handling qualities.

The other thing that stood out was Honza saying 'We like to become friends with our dealers and visit them in person every 2 or 3 years'. I was thinking this would be an easy thing to do within Europe, but would not be possible in the US.

Two years later, Honza and Ales came to visit."



Kelvin Clark
Angletech



Honza & Honza camping in the Nevada desert

AZUB TRIcon & Ti-FLY

TRIKES OF THE YEAR 2015 & 2016



AZUB TRIcon



„The number one reason that people gave for choosing the TRIcon was its innovative rear wheel mounting system that virtually eliminates the “flexy wheel” issue that many riders of large wheel tadpoles complain about. Other reasons were its superb handling, excellent build quality, its ability to fold down into a tiny package and its wide variety of options.”

Bryan J. Ball | BentRider Online Managing Editor



AZUB Ti-FLY



„We all had to wait awhile to see a full-suspension trike from AZUB but the vote count from our readers made it clear that the people think it was worth the wait. AZUB went in a very unconventional direction with the Ti-FLY’s front suspension, using titanium leaf springs in place of a more conventional fixed cruciform. The rest of the trike borrows heavily from the TRIcon. The end product is very impressive indeed.”

Bryan J. Ball | BentRider Online Managing Editor



Tomáš Gayer

Date of birth: 1983
Education: University of Technology,
Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
Lives in: Brno
Position: AZUB designer engineer
Motto: Challenge yourself
Bikes: AZUB Mini, Specialized
Stumpjumper FSR 29,
Monty Urban trial

At the beginning, every tiny detail, every bent tube, every laser cut is born in the head and the hands of a person who has been drawing bicycles since childhood, a person who spends hours cycling and for whom bicycles are the greatest hobby, today we may even say they are his calling. In AZUB, a whole team of people is involved in the development of every new feature or model. Each of them has something to say in each matter and the resulting product is formed by blending the experience and ideas of all. However, there is one person who is behind each AZUB product regarding its actual shape, final technical solution and great ingenuity right from the beginning. Tomáš Gayer. Our colleague, great friend, tough biker and design guru.

Bikes and wheels – companions for life

Can you remember when you first heard about AZUB?

It was in my penultimate year of university, which was in 2008.

How have you actually come to work for a Czech recumbent bike company?

I was thinking about a topic for my diploma thesis. I got into mechanical engineering through my interest in bike design, so that's why I later approached Czech bicycle manufacturers to try and find a suitable assignment for my thesis. I thought it would be my last opportunity to draw something "for pleasure" before I would get swallowed up by some ordinary engineering company after graduation.

Which AZUB project was your very first one?

It was supposed to be a frame for AZUB Highracer. The boys had gained some experience during their non-stop journey from Nordkapp to Gibraltar on one of the two prototypes, and the frame needed further reinforcement. However, in the end the topic of my thesis changed and the project that got the green light was a new trike.

You already had experience with tricycles from the university, right?

Yes, as it were, we built an off road trike at uni when we were in year 4.

I and two friends of mine got a lot of practical experience from the workshop where we assembled and welded the tricycle all by ourselves and according to our design.

What is the biggest challenge in the design of recumbents and trikes?

For me, it's definitely the combination of the variability of these bikes with a small-lot production. There isn't just the one particular bike being designed, but



Riding after work

Can you describe the main differences regarding the construction of recumbent bikes compared to traditional upright bikes?

A recumbent bicycle is more about comfort. Each rider is of different height and feels comfortable in a different position. Therefore, everything must be adjustable in order to adapt the bicycle to the needs of the rider. Ergonomics are more important than weight. Other differences are mainly related to the availability of manufacturing technologies for smaller series.

The steering of AZUB trikes is considered one of the best, if not the best in the world. Why do you think that is?

When designing the steering I tried to take into account all theoretical principles and kept checking the geometry of the entire steering system on a computer model. Even so, these conditions suit different settings of steering. Maybe the first one I chose just happened to be the right one. The fact is that it is used unchanged to this day.

AZUB TRIcon 26 was awarded the title "Trike of the year 2015" by Bentrider.bike (also known as Bentrideronline.com). What are the main advantages of this model?

Trikes with a large rear wheel became very fashionable several years ago, but they all had insufficient rigidity in the rear structure and the rear wheel spokes. We managed to overcome this weakness and that's why today the TRIcon 26 is so exceptional.

One reason for the excellent riding qualities of trikes with rear suspension is also the superb rear fork, both in 20" and 26" versions. What makes it so special?

Both forks are actually as short, and thus as rigid, as possible. This is caused by a hollow crown that provides the main support. In addition, the new 26" rear fork has interchangeable rear dropouts, thanks to which it can even accommodate a wide rear hub with a modern

rather a whole recumbent set which could be put together in different models. This is further intensified by the fact that AZUB builds tailor-made bikes, so the variety is even greater compared to other manufacturers.



Recumbent meeting 2015

12 mm through-axle. This further enforces the rigidity of the fork and the spokes of the rear wheel.

One of the most admired features of AZUB trikes is their folding mechanism. How have you come to this concept of an interchangeable hinge and the actual design anyway?

The folding mechanism divides the frame into two halves at its weakest point and is thus exposed to powerful forces. It can be therefore assumed that it may have a shorter lifetime than the frame itself. That's why in the spirit of our modular concept, I designed the separate hinge to be universal and interchangeable. What is more, parts of the hinge can be manufactured more precisely and from better materials than the rest of the frame and they also have a better surface finish.

What would you like to change about our recumbent bicycles?

In the future, I would definitely like to focus on reducing the weight of our bikes. The volume of our production is continuously growing, which opens up new technological opportunities of how to further reduce the weight.

What do you like about working in AZUB?

Possibly the fact that I am with each project from start to finish. From the first idea and design through to the first prototypes, testing and implementation of mass production all the way to the service, where we can subsequently see any faults. And these in turn become the impetus for new projects.

And what you do dislike, or even hate?

I think it must be drafting manuals.

So what are your favourite locations in the Czech Republic?

I love cycling in Jeseníky and around Brno, which are the most familiar to me. But what I really like the most is exploring new places.

And what's your favourite foreign destination?

Last year I was captivated by Georgia. I definitely want to visit the Caucasian region again soon.

Are there any discoveries that you bring from riding a mountain bike to the recumbents sector?

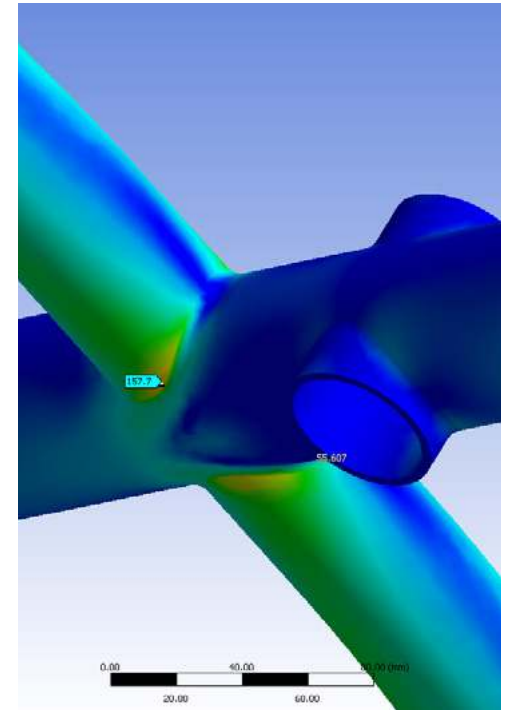
Most definitely. Mountain bikes, as well as road bikes, are well ahead regarding development. Sometimes all it takes is to transfer the right elements into the world of recumbents. For example, this is the case with the TRIcon 26" fixed axis. Overall, mountain bikes have taught me that the simplest things work the best. So I try to stick to this fact even during the development of recumbent bikes.

Regarding recumbents, you have an AZUB Mini with 20" wheels. How does this correspond to the 29" wheels that you prefer in a mountain bike?

I'm very tall. Taking into account my height when using a mountain bike, the size of the wheels has only little impact on my seating. Therefore the crucial thing for me is the ease with which the larger wheels overcome larger obstacles. On the other hand, on a recumbent bicycle the size of the wheels influences the seating height significantly. In theory, the AZUB MAX model is therefore better in tougher terrain than the Mini,



University project



but with 20" wheels I can have more fun and be less afraid, which means that as a result I am able to tackle more challenging situations. In addition, the bike accelerates much faster which on a recumbent in rough terrain is also very pleasant.

What is your Mini equipped with and why?

I have opted for above seat steering for its simplicity, quality 20" front White Brothers Rustler (MRP) air fork with an 80mm travel, lightweight wheels with wide, yet lightweight Schwalbe Mow Joe tyres, a tried and tested 3x9 drive from a mountain bike, and sensitive hydraulic brakes.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell our readers?

Do your best to try and understand how your bike works. Then it will serve you well.

Thank you for the interview!

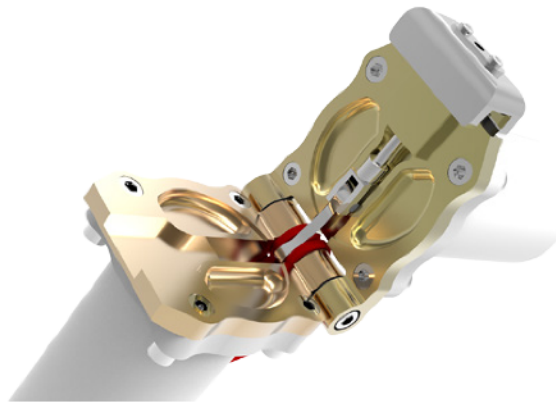
To be or not to be a step ahead. That is the question.

When Aleš Zemánek was founding the AZUB company in 2000, he wanted to be compared with only the best even then. And he wanted to come up with his own solutions that would be significantly better than anything else in the world. This doesn't only mean revolutionary innovations, it means every little detail, each needing to be functional, have the right dimensions, be affordable, producible and also beautiful. To describe all the technical accomplishments on our bikes we are so proud of would fill up several pages. What is more, some of them we change every year, or we come up with new elegant solutions. However, so as to not disappoint you, we have decided to include some of the most interesting ones in our book. The rest, along with videos and more detailed information can be found on our website.



Discover all the
features





New folding hinge

After three years of building folding trikes we decided to improve the folding mechanism. We have redesigned it completely to make it more user friendly, durable, and to offer more precise operation, easy maintenance, and last but not least, the possibility to replace the whole hinge easily when needed.

The hinge itself is not an inseparable part of the frame, it is a single unit which is inserted between the front and rear part of the frame. This offers many advantages. It is possible to manufacture the folding hinge from 7075 aluminium alloy, which is stronger than any weldable material. It is also possible to use hard anodizing instead of powder coating. All parts can be manufactured with extreme precision. This surface treatment is well known for improving mechanical resistance, but we went a step further and decided to have all parts teflon (PTFE) hardcoat anodized. This method, usually used in armament industry, offers ultimate surface protection and also minimizes friction, which is exactly what we needed.

Thanks to precisely matching jags and sags, the frame resists torsional strain much better. Larger diameter, longer hinge axle, which rests in maintenance free sliding bearings, improves the overall strength. The hinge has an ergonomic XXL quick release lever which is positioned on the upper side of the frame. This makes both folding and unfolding extremely easy and smooth.

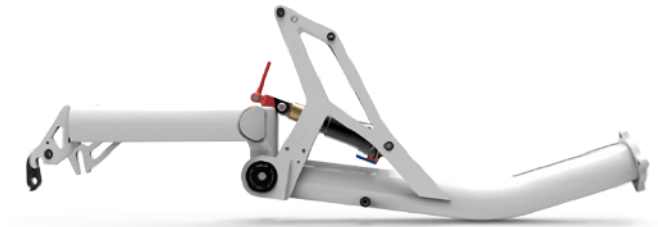


Sliding seat bracket

Our new system of seat sliding immediately on a frame tube, which is used in all our bikes and trikes represents a further development of our IPS and we are really excited about it. It is really accurate in operation, fast and allows you to adjust your seating position with millimeter accuracy.

In order to facilitate handling, we have placed a guide rail on the frame, which prevents the seat bracket from spinning and the angular offset of the seat to the seating plane and pedalling position. The entire bracket is then controlled by two quick releases. The upper one releases the seat, the lower one allows for moving the seat on the frame.

The bracket is made of heavy-duty plastic reinforced with glass fiber and we have been testing it in full operation for many months. The technology we use within its production also guarantees that the frame will remain free of major scratches even in frequent shifting.



Short rear fork for maximum grip and stable cornering

The secret blend of perfect suspension performance and great handling characteristics is hidden in the extremely short rear fork and very solid fork axle. While designing the fork, we had in mind it had to be very short so that the rear wheel would be as close to the seat as possible for maximum grip on roads partly covered by sand or when climbing a steep hill. Not even mentioning all kinds of dirt roads or so. To have the fork and the whole rear part of the frame so short, we had to design a part called fork crown, which is completely CNC machined out of a single piece of aluminum. The crown, onto which the fork legs are welded, is attached to the main frame by a massive axle. The rear shock was placed just under the seat and was partly hidden in the frame in order to keep the rear part of the frame as compact as possible.

Syntace X-12 axle

Poor lateral stiffness is the biggest problem of vast majority of trikes with 26" rear wheels.

It is caused both by the lower stiffness of a standard 26" bicycle wheel (if compared to 20" wheels), and the lower stiffness of the longer rear fork.

We managed to minimize this issue by using a wider hub and the patented Syntace X-12 through axle system, which you can find on majority of higher end mountain bikes.

There will still be the possibility to order the TRIcon 26 with gear hubs or a motor with standard 135mm wide hubs.



Colorshop - let your imagination run wild

Colours bring joy to our lives. Colours make the world around us beautiful and fun. Colours help to give us a sense of direction and often make life much easier. Colours, as well as music, are exciting, energizing, they can express our personality, feelings or current mood. So when you are expecting your new bike, why limit yourself to standard? And if standard, why is it so limited?

All AZUB frames for recumbents are manufactured in the Czech Republic and get their final finish only after we learn for whom the particular bike will be built. Nowhere in our company can one see dozens of already painted frames waiting for someone to order them. Therefore, we are not only able to offer a wide range of standard colours, but we have also prepared a new adventure for you. Now you can select different combinations of colours for individual parts of your bike, you no longer have to have a bike in one colour and lots of parts in one plain black. After all, everything that can be painted can be painted in any colour!

And what is more, you have an option to choose from several colours of front hub dynamos, Rohloff Speedhubs, nipples or spokes. Imagination has no limits and with AZUB, your world can be much more colourful. We only hope that creating your own colour scheme will bring you pleasure rather than too much trouble. Have fun!



What does building a truly custom-made bike entail?

When you look at our price list, at first glance it may seem a bit complicated and confusing. We admit that for someone who is unfamiliar with bicycle components choosing the right bike might be daunting. However, that is where our brilliant dealers from all over the world come in or you can also write an email directly to us and we will help you choose the best bike for you.

In AZUB, we know very well why we offer such a wide range of component lines and so many other options and accessories. You see, every customer is different. Everyone prefers different things and everyone has a reason for it. Someone likes red colour, another likes blue, one loves disc brakes for their enormous power, the other prefers the infinite durability of drum brakes for trikes. And the same goes for cranks, tyres or dynamos. Only a company that has a sufficiently wide range on offer and that is able to be flexible with regard to building a bike according to the customer's wishes and needs is able to fulfil his dream. We go one step further and for some of you we build bikes from components and combinations that are not even on our price list, and in the winter, we at times carry out minor modifications on the frames. We do not churn out thousands of bikes per year but prefer to concentrate on real custom-builds that make you, as well as us, happy.





Peter Osterveršnik

Date of birth: 1976
Education: University of electronics and economics
Lives in: Maribor (Slovenia)
Job: CAD/CAM engineering
Motto: Just enjoy the moment!
Bikes: Nazca Fuego, Ice Sprint FS and AZUB TRIcon

One of the smaller European countries in its southern part is also the nice and fairly hilly Slovenia. Formerly a part of Yugoslavia, this today an independent sovereign state has much to offer, especially to nature lovers. Peter Osterveršnik is without a doubt the biggest fan of recumbent bikes in this country and a man who has significantly contributed to their popularity. However, Slovenia is connected with more well-known recumbent names, one of them Demjan Zabovnik who managed to reach the speed of 127 km/h in his fully-faired recumbent and who is a highly respected designer of the so called streamliners, the fastest bicycles on the planet. Peter also played a role in the decision of Marija Kozin using AZUB 5 to complete her arduous journey from Beijing to Skofja Loka. Read how Peter came to be interested in recumbents, selling them, and what he enjoys today.

On being a recumbent dealer in mountainous Slovenia

Can you describe to us the way that led you to using recumbents and later becoming the only dealer of them in Slovenia?

Well actually I had no idea recumbents existed when I was looking for a new bike. I just got an idea somehow that I want a bike with the Rohloff. I was never a sports person and I never really cycled before. Just to the shop and back mostly. Except that last year when I decided to upgrade my old steel frame bike. I did thousands of kilometres in the season and I have earned myself a new bike.



So I started looking for a bike with Rohloff and I found only one classic bike producer who offered such a setup. A KTM bike. And a lot of other producers of funny bikes of which everyone had an option for a Rohloff. But I'd never seen such a bike before. When I read about them though I started asking myself why would I need to sit on such a small seat with buttocks pain, neck pain, back pain, and all other kinds of pain of classic geometry if it is actually not necessary as these funny bike producers claim. But there was one problem. Everywhere it said they they couldn't climb hills. And I live in a hilly area :) So I searched for a nearby dealer and found a HP Velotechnik one south of Vienna and company AZUB not so far away.

I decided to try both, so I drove to Vienna and then to Uheršky Brod where I stayed for three days to rent the AZUB MAX and try it out in the hills. I had no recumbent muscles and I had no idea how to cycle a recumbent but I just knew I had to be able to climb hills. As otherwise these luxury bikes are just not suitable for Slovenia. I borrowed AZUB MAX and cycled south towards the hills. I had my first flat tyre in my whole life on this first tour. :) I had no tools, so Honza had to come and bring the spare and tools. He forgot the pump so he had to do two rides. And luckily he gave me tools and a spare tube as I had another flat when I reached the top of the 900m hill. But during climbing I was already thinking which color to order.

And as there were no chances to try such a bike in Slovenia, I decided to ask Aleš for possible cooperation. So I started promoting recumbents in Slovenia in 2006 as a hobby. I am really glad I did as it was a start of a new era in my life.

How do you use recumbents nowadays?

I do not cycle with anything else than recumbents. So I use them for everyday trips but also for travelling. On trips, I much prefer trikes rather than two-wheel recumbents.



I mainly like hills and a trike is much better on a hilly terrain as you can really climb hills with a relaxed pace. With proper gearing of course.

How difficult is it to sell recumbents in a small country like Slovenia?

Well in the beginning I actually sold more than I anticipated. At that time it was actually only bikes. Trikes were still only in early stages and also I was not really convinced they could be useful. Today I could not say which one is better. I like both. It depends on what you want it for.

But today it is very difficult to sell much as they just got too expensive. Prices go up every year and it is now simply too expensive for most people in Slovenia. As wages have not gone up much and especially since the economical crisis, the situation is just getting worse. People who have money want an expensive classic bikes as it is a very important status symbol. Even more than cars. And Slovene people are crazy about cars. And you know, you cannot show your neighbour a recumbent and tell him you paid 5,000 Euro for it as he will say you are crazy. But a 5,000 Euro carbon frame bike, WOW! Whether you are actually using it or not, this is not important. :)

You were a member of the team that rode on a prototype of an AZUB Highracer from Nordkapp to Gibraltar. How nice or bad are your memories of this adventure?

I have great memories. I would never repeat it as driving in a car was way too tiring and we had no time to stop at interesting places. But cycling through France on that trip made me plan my first long cycling adventure. I just fell in love with France. And once you do such a cycling trip you will never forget it and all other classic types of travel just won't do it anymore.

You have done several long distance tours on trikes. Where have you been and why did you choose such countries?

I have done one with a friend of mine who cycled a classic df bike. That was through north Italy and south France. After that I cycled alone to the Black Sea and back; I also cycled through Greece, down to Archaia Olympia. A very interesting experience was also a shorter trip to Czech Republic with a former girlfriend Mirka and her daughter Lara on a Hase Pino tandem. And last year I cycled home from Albania with the AZUB TRIcon.

Which country was most challenging?

Hmm, I could say Greece as I'd never had so many steep hills anywhere else. But Albania is the other extreme as I had to pedal downhill because of the big stony road;

What do you like more - bikes or trikes? What is the difference between them, and do you see a clear reason why some people should choose a bike and some others a trike?

As I already mentioned. I like both. I think it depends on what you want from the bike/trike. For short cycling trips and brevets a bike is a great choice, but for longer distances on a hilly terrain I would always choose a trike with a wide range of gears. Especially into the low range;) something like Schlumpf mountandrive or DualDrive and triple chainring combination or other crazy solutions...

If you want to go fast, take a bike. If you want to enjoy hills, take a trike. This would be a short decision making suggestion. In any case, I like to say that the biggest advantage of recumbents compared to df bikes is the view: "Asphalt in Greece looks exactly the same as in Slovenia." and on a classic bike frame this is what you are looking at all the time. So my promotional message for recumbent sales is: cycling with a view.

What I would like to see on the recumbent market is a very simple and light tilting trike which behaves like a bike. This would be the winner!

You also ride a hand bike although you are not disabled. How has that happened?

Handcycling is a great way of upper body exercise. Handbikes are very fast on a flat terrain. Faster than recumbent trikes in my case. The reason is high efficiency because of a stiff and light frame. I really enjoy handcycling as you feel at one with the bike.

How I came to it?

I had some problems with my left knee and I was looking for other alternatives to be active outside. I bought a handbike and met Christian Peter who organised a group training in Austria not far from me. And that's where I really got hooked. After that I started organising handbike meetings and everything just followed. My longest handbike distance is cca 125km with average of around 23km/h on a normal terrain.

Do you know any other person in the world riding such a bike despite the fact that they are able to ride a normal bike?

I know two actually. But we are very rare :) Normaly a healthy person who can use legs would cycle with his/her legs. But some of us aren't really "normal" :) I even got one step further and I also sitski. And I actually like it more than normal skiing. And I would never ski down a 75% slope on my feet :)

What does AZUB mean to you?

I think of the AZUB team as my friends. We are not business partners in my eyes. Well, their team has grown significantly in the past years and I do not know most of them now. But... I like their creations. They have high quality products and are listening to their customers, they are very versatile and adjustable. And AZUB MAX was my first recumbent!

Thank you for the interview!





Bryan Ball

Date of birth: 1975

Lives in: Rochester, NY (USA)

Job: Writer, Comedian

Motto: Bikes vary every day

BentRider.bike, or if you prefer bentRideronline.com, is today the most successful and respected recumbent bike medium in the world. It was founded by Bryan Ball in the same year as Aleš Zemánek founded the AZUB brand. Before long, the paths of these two men crossed. How does Bryan recall their first meeting and how he sees AZUB today? And what does he think about the world of recumbents in general?

Mr. Bent Rider

What do recumbents mean for you?

Freedom and liberation more than anything. Over the years, I've seen so many lives completely changed by recumbents. People who never thought they'd ride again are getting out and doing amazing things that they thought were no longer possible.

When did you see a recumbent bike for the first time? And could you test ride it soon?

I went to work for The Bicycle Man in New York, and he had a RANS Rocket as his personal bike. While I was there, his business shifted from primarily selling uprights to college kids to selling recumbents to people who came from hours away. I got bitten by the bug pretty quickly.

How was BentRideronline.com born?

After I worked at Bicycle Man awhile I had to retire from mountain bike racing. I went to work as a sports writer at a local newspaper. I kept riding recumbents as a hobby and eventually decided to combine the two. I wrote for Recumbent Cyclist News for a bit then decided to start my own publication. I always intended for BentRider to become a print magazine but the timing worked out so that it didn't make any sense to do that.

Where do you see a difference between recumbent culture in Europe and the USA?

I think the European recumbent community is a lot more serious. Not in a bad way. The average American trike rider, for example, probably has a lot more "toys" on their ride but doesn't necessarily put on more miles than the average European. Americans mostly aren't raised with the idea of bicycles as transportation. They aren't as likely to be out riding in a rainstorm.

Is there anything we can call recumbent culture?

Absolutely! I think the stereotype of the bearded old guy is slowly fading but it's definitely still there. I think the "recumbent culture" is just one of friendliness and helpfulness. As a whole, we're still very tiny and most people are very willing to welcome in new members.

Is there anything you miss in the world of recumbents nowadays?

I definitely miss the "old days" of a decade or two ago when we were all just getting going and trying to figure it all out. When you'd call up a company and the owner answered and everyone knew each other personally. I definitely don't miss the complete lack of ways to make a living in the recumbent industry back then though.

What pops up in your head when somebody says: "AZUB"?

Durability, quality.

Do you remember when you heard about the company for the first time?

I don't recall exactly but I imagine it was at Spezi.

And the first time you saw AZUB bikes in real?

At Spezi in the early 2000's. Probably 2002?

What did you think at that time?

Well the bikes weren't as refined as they are now for sure. The build quality was a bit crude but the prices were great and the people seemed very passionate about it.

Which model did you test for the first time, and what was the feeling?

A 3.2 in 2003. I remember that the bike itself was very well made (especially for the price) but that some of the components weren't very good. I saw a lot of promise in it but thought that there was still a ways to go.

You had a special experience, didn't you?

Ales and another employee brought a bike to my house for me to review. They drove up from Czech in an old Skoda crammed with more bikes than should ever be put in an old Skoda.

I remember that one of them was wearing these terrible plaid pants and I thought they were both a bit odd at first. We could barely communicate with each other. Then we all decided to go for a ride and the language of cycling took over and we all connected. It was a really fun day.

How do you see the company right now?

I'm very impressed by where AZUB has gone. From two guys in a beat up hatchback in my driveway to one of the biggest recumbent manufacturers in Europe.

Your portal has given AZUB TRIcon 26 a Trike of the Year 2015 Award. Why do you think this trike won?

The biggest thing that people always mention about AZUB is how well they're made so that was a big factor, of course. I think it was also all the work done on the rear with the wider hub and through-axle. None of us new that brake steer was an issue until ICE designed a trike without it. I wonder if rear wheel flex will be the same. No one knew it was an issue until AZUB got rid of it.

AZUB just celebrated 15 years of existence in 2015. What would you wish to the whole AZUB team for the next 15 years?

Keep pushing into other markets. Azub has taken off in the US in the last few years and I'd love to see that continue.

And what would you wish for yourself AZUB do in the next 15 years?

I try not to think that far ahead but that delta prototype you keep flashing around looks pretty cool.

Thank you for the interview!





Yoann Komorn

Date of birth: 1984
Education: Tourism
Lives in: Near Toulouse (France)
Job: Tourism consultant
Motto: What doesn't kill you makes you stronger
Bikes: Azub Max, Pedersen, Toxy ZR

When Yoann first came to our stand at the SPEZI show in Germany, we could immediately see that this customer would be fun. He had a big smile on his face and was looking for parts for his IBEX, which he had bought second-hand, it was lovely chatting with him. We met with him like that many times and also exchanged a lot of e-mails, not only about AZUB bikes, but also about our wacky recumbent dreams and gradually also about completely different things. Yoann has especially hit it off with Honza, later came to visit us in Uherský Brod and while touring around France on business, we got a chance to visit him near Toulouse. It happens quite often that our acquaintances become true friends. They are, however, faced with one problem. As our friends, they must sometimes wait a little longer for replies to e-mails, because customers take priority.

A story about one friendship

When did you start to ride a recumbent?

I started to ride on a recumbent 6 years ago. It was somewhere in South France in a summer party, somebody showed up with a recumbent. He made me try and it was clear within the next 10 mn that this would be my full time transportation tool in a near future...

Why do you think it is a cool machine?

I really enjoy it as it is comfortable, efficient and the design is amazing. It is also a great tool for creating bonds with people, everybody has always a lot of questions!

What other sports do you like doing?

Any 2 wheeled sports without motor is good to me so I also enjoy riding other kind of bikes such as mountain bikes or other upridding ones. I have a deep love for wintersports too, most likely snowscoot. It looks pretty much like a BMX with no saddle, no pedals and 2 little snowboards instead of wheels... It brings hours of pleasure! I'm also a great fan of dirtsurfing (or inline boarding), it looks like a snowboard with tires and is meant to be used downhill only on paved roads, it works offroad too.



Why did you chose the AZUB IBEX first?

I bought the Ibex for several reasons. First of all, it seemed to me that it was quite a versatile bike with its full suspension, making it usable on rough terrain without forgetting the road. I also enjoyed at first its acid green color. Finally, the guy who sold it to me did not use it that much and he was living quite close to me, all made sense.

And why did you change to the MAX later?

The change to the MAX came with many changes: I wanted to have a stiffer bike (especially on the rear side as I use it a lot for off road rides), the gears and the brakes needed a change and I also wanted to enjoy all the new updates provided with it: easier change of the seat thanks to the bracket setting, higher handlebar durability due to a system allowing it to twist when you fall rather than bending and so on.

Do you have any other interesting bikes?

I have a Toxy ZR that I use for speed purposes only and I'm a proud and lucky owner of a Pedersen.

The Pedersen is a unique machine. Can you tell us what you like about it?

I would lie if I said that I like the weight of this bike, or its aerodynamic function, but this bike smells like history! It has an outstanding design with its triangular frame, its hanging hammock leather saddle and its curvy handlebars. It is incredibly smooth and comfortable to ride, anyone should try it.

Your AZUB MAX has a golden Rohloff. How did you get a gold colored Rohloff? It is a pretty unusual color.

That started like every good love story, with



a bit of luck and by being there at the right place and time. I saw this golden Rohloff in a German shop, it was kind of lonely and I just thought that it had to be used rather than rotting in a shop. I contacted the Rohloff guys afterwards to ask about the color as it is unusual, they told me that it's a piece out of 100 that have been made for a special order in Germany... Unbelievable! So I take twice as much care of it now. :)

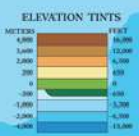
What was your biggest cycling challenge?

The biggest bike challenge was for me the mHealth Grand Tour in 2013. It was about going from Brussels to Barcelona in 2 weeks, if you prefer figures it was about 2100km and 22.000m climb in 14 days through 5 countries. It was very challenging, both physically and mentally but full of great people and certainly an experience of a lifetime.

Do you have any cycling dreams for the future?

Who does not have cycle dreams??? The Paris-Brest-Paris is hanged on my to-do/wish list but I would enjoy more than everything to make a world tour and starting by in depth traveling in South America... For those projects, three major elements are necessary: health, money and time. When all three of them are at a good level, it will be time to go.

Thank you for the interview!



Join the Community



See all the expeditions and trips on our web or even create your own one



AZUB team

Nordkapp - Gibraltar 6 000 Km



Gavin Moles

France - India 14 000 Km



Nico & Anne-Ce

France - Thailand 15 000 Km



Marija Kozin

China - Slovenia 17 000 Km



Damien Bagot

France - Russia 14 000 Km



Joachim & Fanny

Russia - Mongolia 3 400 Km



Bróña Nágel

Iceland 1 000 Km



Thomas & Damien

South America 7 500 Km



Florent & Florence

Around the World 24 000 Km



Alexys & Valerie

USA - Mexico 16 500 Km



Frederic Lepron

Morocco - South Africa 16 000 Km



Igor Bilek

Australia 9 000 Km



Marija Kozin

Date of birth: 1980
Education: a degree in hotel management
Lives in: Skofja Loka (Slovenia)
Bikes: AZUB 5

Marija gave the interview at a time when she was about to set off on the next part of her recumbent bike journey from the Chinese Beijing to the Slovenian town of Skofja Loka. She managed the second part of her journey without major problems and did more than 17,000 kilometres on a recumbent bike AZUB 5. For us in AZUB, it was the first major sponsorship venture and at the same time a huge experience. The bike subsequently arrived in our workshop and so we had the opportunity to explore the wear of all key components in detail. Whether you believe it or not, most of the parts were original, incl. the chain, cranks, cassettes, chain tubes or pulleys. What is more, many parts remained on the bike even after we serviced it and they are still there seven years later. We have also become good friends with Marija and enjoy meeting up with her, for example during the last International Recumbent Meeting in 2015 which took place in Uherský Brod.

A magnificent battle of kilometres, loneliness, mud and harassment

Most cycling travelogues are written by men who write about their solo journeys or about purely male expeditions. Now and again, there appears an article about some journey written by a couple. But to meet a lone cyclist woman travelling the world is almost a miracle. Marija Kozin from Slovenia is one of them. Over the last three years she has cycled more than 25,000 kilometres and is now back on the road, fulfilling her dream of a journey from Slovenia to Beijing and back.

Had you covered many kilometres on the bike before you decided to travel from Slovenia to China?

No. But the bicycle has always been a huge part of my life. I would cycle to school, to work, to the library and occasionally I would decide to go on a cycling trip just for fun. Two weeks was the longest journey I had ever done on a bike before I had gone to China.

And have you been on any other adventures or expeditions?

I am afraid not. But then again – I was often outdoors. I used to climb and hike, go cross-country skiing, but no, I had never been on an expedition before.

Did you look for someone to go with you, or were you 100% sure that you would go alone?

I set off with Mikolaj, a Polish guy. Together we went all the way to Tehran, but then we decided to go our separate ways. Since then I have basically been alone. Sometimes I would meet someone on the road and go with them, which was fine and if I didn't, that was fine too. I've got used to being alone. It's just different.

Has the end point of your destination changed during the trip, or have you known all along which place you want to reach?

It has been my lifelong dream to travel using only human strength from my home town in Skofja Loka in Slovenia to Beijing. This part of the world is just absolutely amazing, with all that culture and nature between these two points. The original plan was to travel from Slovenia to Beijing and then take the train back home through Mongolia and Russia. However, the plans changed. I was given a chance to try a recumbent bike and so the opportunity to cycle back home as well. For me, this is not a journey. For me it is my time spent in my way. Nevertheless, I said to myself that I wanted to be back home by summer 2008. Back to normal life, without daily cycling and travelling.

Why did you choose the bicycle? Why not a train or a bus, or even hitchhiking?

And why not the bicycle? I am a big fan of travelling by own means without polluting the environment. And after I considered all the factors such as money, distance and time, the bicycle seemed like the best solution. And it's been absolutely fantastic. Sure, there were times when I cried and ached all over, when I had problems and made many mistakes. But there were also moments of absolute joy and enjoyment of life. I have no doubt that the bike has been the best decision for me.

I assume that you yourself don't see any problems in travelling alone, even though for many of us, it is unthinkable. Nevertheless, have there been moments when you wished to have someone beside you to help you, give advice or just simply share the good and the bad?

I have no problems with motivation. In that respect it's been a breeze. I don't need anyone to encourage me. However, there have been

moments when I would have liked to have a chat with someone and not spend weeks and weeks on the road by myself. It is especially difficult in China when one cannot talk to anybody because nobody speaks a language I would know. And there are moments that I hate, moments when I would like to have someone beside me, like when I am being bothered by some guy.

You've had several problems with the bike on the way from Slovenia to China and later with the recumbent. Were you able to fix everything by yourself or did someone help you? I suppose you have no problems with brake adjustments and defects.

Both, really. Some parts got completely damaged so I needed to replace them. It was the rims and the cranks. I had done some repairs before and now and again I asked for help. At other times I would have a think and improvise and find a solution. So, most often I learn from my mistakes and experiences.

The biggest problems must have been large cities in Russia and Eastern Europe, when you rode through them alone. Have you made up any rules for yourself that you follow to avoid problems?

Not really, I think that while on the road, I always get used to the conditions of each place. Passage through such cities has neither been easy nor nice. I hate male harassment! I hate it when they seem not to understand the word "No!" I hate vodka! But such experiences have been few and far between. There are also many wonderful experiences. People are amazing. They help, they give advice, they let me sleep over and share their food. No, I don't have any rules. I am who I am and I listen to my heart and my brain.

Even when you set off from Slovenia you did not have much luggage on the bike, and then on the recumbent you basically had just two bags. It seems that you don't need too much to live. How have you come to such decision?

When a person needs to be independent and occasionally push their bike or even pick it up and carry it at times, then he thinks hard about what he really needs. When I have to choose between two litres of water and three beautiful t-shirts and a face cream, the water is a clear winner. In the end, it's not really so much about the bike or how much luggage you have. It's more about the fact that you are venturing out to discover the world and enjoy yourself. I have met cyclists with perfect bicycles and top quality gear, but many were not enjoying their journey at all.

When did you learn that there are bikes you can recline on?

My friend Peter rides recumbent bikes and imports them to Slovenia. We have talked about them a lot and he also showed me Rob Thomson's website. He began his round the world trip on a recumbent and is now continuing on a special skateboard.

How long did it take you to decide to use a recumbent bike for your return journey?

I took several months.

Who or what was the last thing that helped you to make the decision?

It was an offer of sponsorship from AZUB. If they had not supported my wish to try the recumbent bike, I would not have been riding it today.

How difficult was it to get the recumbent into China?

It cost an awful lot of money and nobody believed it was a bicycle, particularly the customs. It's the same when I arrive at a service place. First they stare and only then they start solving anything.

What were the first few metres and kilometres like on the recumbent in the middle of Beijing? They were your first ever recumbent experiences with nobody around to give advice. Did you ever say to yourself: "Oh my God, what have I got myself into?"

No, I didn't. Even when I look back I have no regrets. I have done something that will leave a great imprint in my life. A recumbent versus a classic bike. Both have their pluses and minuses. Neither is perfect and both are great in their own way.

Back to your travels. What have been the worst and best overnight places?

I cannot say I have experienced the worst one yet but there were several very bad ones. To name a few, there were the public toilets in Guizhou Province in China, the cemetery near Hanoi in Vietnam, or the middle of the road just before the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan saddle. And the best? Almost all the nights I slept far enough from the road so I couldn't hear the traffic and was able to watch the night skies. I love sleeping in the Pamir Mountains or when somebody invites me to sleep in their home.

In the end you did just 8000 km from Beijing and had to return home because of problems with your knee. What are your plans now?

When I returned home, I certainly did not look like a healthy, ecstatic individual who had cycled 25,000 km. There was a lot of pain and no joy. But the operation helped. After two months I am now back in Shanghai. It is far too soon but I just can't help it. Life in such a large city is not that great. I must set off soon and finish the journey home. I did want to have a break for a few months but things have sort of turned out like this.

Thank you for the interview and good luck to you!





India 2010



Honza Galla

Date of birth: 1980
Education: Sport Management
Lives in: Uherské Hradiště
Job in AZUB: Sales & Marketing
Motto: First give then take
Bikes: AZUB Mini

Honza has been in AZUB since 2005, he was the third member of our team and the only "non-Zemánek" to experience the company being headquartered in Aleš's boyhood room when lunches were cooked by his mum. Today, he takes care of the sales and marketing and tries to explore the world on recumbents as often as possible. With his wife Eliška, they undertook several long trips on the AZUB TWIN recumbent tandem prototype, travelled the rocky roads of Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo on AZUB MAXes, managed to cross the Himalayan 4000m+ passes in Ladakh in India, and took part in many other expeditions. Honza's last big event was participating in the solar bike race from France to Kazakhstan in 2013. With his partner and another member of the AZUB team, Karel Šebela, they finished in an excellent overall 4th place and were the first team at the finishing line. They covered the distance of 7,800 km over 46 days with an average speed of 170 km per day.



Albania 2006



Israel 2011





Bróňa Nágel

Date of birth: 1946

Born Assisi (Italy)

Lives in: Uherský Brod (Czech)

Bikes: The second AZUB trike ever build

Retirement: New phase of my life

Broňa is an ultra-active cycling pensioner who helped Aleš with his first recumbent attempts while still working in Česká zbrojovka and who has wholeheartedly supported him the whole time. He is a kind of our corporate mascot. He is also involved in the production of our bicycles by preparing the short loops that fasten the chain tubes to the frame, but otherwise he spends most of his time on his yellow trike, roaming around the local or more distant countryside. Not only has he travelled around Iceland twice, but he has also toured the 49th parallel from point A (Atlantic) to point B (Brod, as in Uherský Brod), travelled from Switzerland along the Rhine River all the way to the sea, then along the coast back home following the Elbe and smaller Czech rivers. Every year Broňa travels thousands of kilometres, discusses any problems and ideas with us, and is also more than actively involved in the testing of our tricycles. The last two long journeys he travelled on our front suspension prototypes.

RETIRED





The Mole

My granddaughter Katka gave me the Mole in 2008. It was her last day in kindergarten and the first day of my first trip to Iceland. I've called him Honza Azubič – AZUBiCZ. In Iceland, he became a celebrity because nobody there had ever seen a real live mole. There's lava everywhere so it would have had to have WC claws. Not as in the bog like but Wolfram Carbide, to tunnel through the stuff.

When I voyage around here, Honza is taking a breather in the drawer to be ready for the next jaunt in the world. He is a right globetrotter, he is.

And a right skirt chaser too, as he's got snaps with about fifty (to a hundred) chicks from different parts of the world.



Honza Žďánský

Date of birth: 1986
Education: Secondary level
Lives in: Mladá Boleslav
Job: Freelance glazier
Motto: Live every day to the full... It may be your last.
Bike: Surley ECR



Watch the movie

I bade farewell to my life

Honza Žďánský is AZUB's friend. With our support, he rode on a classic bike around the northern hemisphere and in the autumn of 2014 he got a crazy idea to cross the frozen Siberian Lake Baikal on a bicycle. It only took a few minutes to see that it would be us who would take care of the development and construction of a fat trike suitable for snow, which we would base on AZUB T-Tris, and that Honza would set off on his ice expedition in March the following year on three wheels. The following lines will tell you all about the whole experience, about the preparations, the deep fear and great joy, and also about earthquakes. We recommend that before you start reading, you should at least put on a pair of nice warm socks.

The idea for a winter crossing of Lake Baikal simmered in my head for over a year. The thought itself actually came to me right there, by the lake. During my trip to Japan I spent several days on its southern shores and I had time to think. The desire to do something unusual and new did eventually bring me onto Baikal's ice. The actual planning of an authentic polar expedition was a challenge in itself. The more I studied about the polar topic, the more I was determined to embark on some chilly adventure. The turning point came after I talked about the trip with my friends in Azub. They came up with an idea of their own and proposed the journey to be done on a recumbent trike made by them. With this suggestion, the whole trip took on a new dimension, larger by exactly one wheel.

Unexpected complications surfaced soon, a week before departure I learnt that that year the Siberian winter had been extremely warm and that in places the lake wasn't frozen over. I had kept a watch on the weather throughout the whole winter and the temperatures did not go over the -10°C mark. So the news of a "warm winter" came as a surprise.



Nevertheless, on 6th of March, shortly after noon, I stood on the shore of Lake Baikal in the village Kultuk and headed north. It was snowing and windy, the visibility was around half a kilometre. Before long, the layer of snow on the frozen surface of the lake began to be increasingly difficult to ride through, to the point when I was forced to stop and get off the trike. I had known that the possibility I might have to pull the trike behind me was there, but spending six days in the harness was not. The deep powder snow and drifts made riding the trike impossible, so I had no choice but to move forward on foot. Day after day, eight hours of hard work crossing ice walls and hummocks, snow everywhere. Crossing or bypassing cracks required using 100% of my physical strength. Here I discovered an unexpected advantage of the trike, the possibility of transferring the cargo between the front wheels, thus creating a fatbike cart which was reasonably stable and easier to operate. The most critical moments came with the cracks in ice. I came across



them every day. Some I was able to just step over and carry on, others, 50-70 cm wide, I had to walk around until I found a place where I risked crossing. There was no space for an error. Knowing that I was "in it" alone and getting help from someone else was out of the question, caution was my highest priority. In six days I managed to move forward a little over 100 km. It was a pitiful result. My optimistic plan that I could cross the lake in two weeks was just a laughable memory.

The turning point came after a week when I finally began seeing smooth ice and the frozen snow drifts became passable. Despite that, I was not able to speed up. There was no respite from



cracks in the ice, and what was more, I started coming across areas with only thin ice. Although due to bypassing bad places I walked and rode many kilometres, my direct approach was only around 20 kilometres per day. It was clear that to complete the journey I would need to replenish my food supplies in the middle of the lake, on the Olkhon Island. Unfortunately, in the end I wasn't able to do that. On the tenth day, the whole journey received a final blow. At eleven o'clock in the morning, just as I was starting to move to the left shore, there came an earthquake accompanied by a dreadful noise of cracking ice that rattled the "solid ground" under my feet. For endless seconds, with bated breath and my heart in my throat I stood and waited for what would happen next. The earthquake opened up several new cracks and crevices, and I had no choice but to return closer to the shore. An hour later came a second quake that continued to break up the ice. Terror-stricken, I raced the shortest way to the shore. Even so, those seven kilometres took me nearly two hours. After this incident, which left several scars on my heart, realizing that the entire region was at that moment totally unstable, and after much deliberation, I decided to abort the mission to cross the lake. I refused to return onto the lake under those conditions.

Despite all that, I have great memories of Baikal. It was a huge life's lesson for me, not only because of travelling in extremely cold temperatures, but also mentally. Nature is beautiful and unpredictable, and it is precisely that what pulls me outside, away from the warmth of my home.





The Silk Road and trikes

They set off on their journey from the foot of the Eiffel Tower on one beautiful sunny Sunday in March 2014. Nicolas Cochin, originally from Jumeauville, and his girlfriend, Anne-Cé. Ultimately, they managed to win a crazy bet that they would travel 12,500 kilometres from Paris to Bangkok along the Silk Road. They travelled on two AZUB TRIcon trikes.

“We did practice a bit, but we had never travelled too far big on a bike. Many people thought we wouldn’t cope,” says Anne-Cé. In fact, it took several thousand kilometres before they adjusted their bikes, learnt from their mistakes and dared to camp in the wild. “We dreamt of open spaces, of living in the outdoors, but the first part of our journey took us mainly along roads in urban areas,” the young woman continues. But there were other things that could have discouraged our two adventurers. Right after leaving France, they had to deal with snow, which meant that they had to undertake their first ascend up a mountain in heavy snowfall.

However, in Italy they found their pace and although the scenery was not that interesting, they enjoyed the delicious food and great hospitality of the people. In the Balkans, the scenery improved significantly and the food was good too. But those hills! Albania showed them that the more east they went, everything would change. Hardly anyone observed rules on the roads, cars would drive in whatever lane took their fancy and they even saw a van with just three wheels.

Getting to Istanbul marked leaving Europe behind and the start of a true adventure. In Turkey, they often slept in a tent at petrol stations, and when those dwindled down the more east they went, Nicolas and Anne-Cé experienced true Turkish hospitality, because people often invited them to their houses. This experience intensified in Iran. “The Iranians are incredibly hospitable. We felt like family members there. They wanted to keep us,” the travellers reminisce.

Central Asia began with Turkmenistan and it wasn’t a great experience. The state offers only a five-day transit visa, but the distance you need to travel is more than 500 kilometres. Additionally, the roads were pretty bad and the temperature was reaching 50 °C. Eventually, they managed to get to the Uzbek border, although the last sixty kilometres they had to travel on a truck. Uzbekistan was much easier and they were able to visit the historic cities of Bukhara and Samarkand on the famous Silk Road. In Tajikistan, however, they were faced with the hardest challenge. To travel the second highest altitude road, the legendary Pamir Highway, across six passes, some of which are at a height of over 4,000 metres above sea level. Compared with their friends on classic bikes who often had to get down and push their bikes up, going on three wheels was better. As they say: “We move slowly but surely.” Nevertheless, it wasn’t only the steep mountains that hindered them. Every morning their tent was covered in hoarfrost and the water in their bottles was frozen. China is a country with such an extremely varied landscape, nature and culture, that it can take your breath away. But you need it to travel hundreds of kilometres. Their reward came with some glorious stages in Southeast Asia and a several weeks of rest in Bangkok. After that, they only had to go from Amsterdam airport back to Paris, to stop their odometer at 12,500 km.

Their performance was absolutely amazing!





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