

Velo Vision Sample Article



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If you have any comments, problems or suggestions about the magazine in general, or this PDF in particular, please email me at

peter@velovision.com

I hope you enjoy the read!

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher, *Velo Vision*

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COVER: The custom trike developed by Inspired Cycle Engineering for an attempt to cycle to the South Pole is tested in the disused Poldice quarry in Cornwall. Photo: ICE

OPPOSITE: A very different custom trike: Steve from Two Hoots Ice Cream (www.facebook.com/TwoHootsIceCream) shows us his solar-powered vending trike: the panels on the canopy power the freezer via a battery on the rear rack. Photo: Peter Eland

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Cargo centric

We're rather heavy on cargo bikes this issue, with no fewer than four tested to varying extents, plus the Atlas trailer and a visit to a London specialist dealer. I'm not sure I should be apologising, though. Cargo bikes are a vital part of the 'velo vision': goods and people need to be transported in any cycle-friendly community. And even if you're not fortunate enough to live in such a place, cargo bikes are a low cost, fitness-enhancing, non-polluting way to go about your business.

The pendulum will swing in a more laid back direction for Issue 48, though. Already lined up are reviews of the AZUB TriCON recumbent trike and the Windcheetah SL bike, and we're also hoping to do reports on the Greenspeed Magnum trike, Nazca Quetzal tandem and Veloschmitt velomobile.

And I hope readers will continue to write in too: your contributions are always very much appreciated, be it on cargo bikes, trikes, recumbents or anything velovisionary!

Peter Eland

The transformer trailer



hard at all. Folding it is simply the reverse.

You also need to attach the hitch hardware to your bike (or bikes – spares are available). The Atlas uses the now well proven and popular 'Lollipop' hitch from Carryfreedom, and the part that stays on your bike is essentially a simple angle bracket. It goes under either an axle nut or a quick-release: one bike I tried it on needed a longer QR skewer, but another was fine.

The trailer can be used behind bikes with wheel sizes from as small



The Atlas trailer from Circe Cycles looks at first glance like a simple, basic utility trailer. But it folds, too!

The people behind the Atlas, Circe Cycle, are responsible for the Airnimal folding bike as well as the Helios and Morpheus tandems. This trailer was, they say, designed primarily to go behind these machines. As most folders aren't naturally best suited to carrying bulky items, a trailer is a nice way of coping with such occasional loads. Tandems too often struggle to carry enough gear for two people on one

bike. Indeed, many riders need occasional extra cargo capacity, and the Atlas is intended to deliver this without taking up too much storage space.

The Atlas is on sale for £199 through Circe's dealers and distributors in many countries.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Atlas arrives in a promisingly small box, barely larger than its folded size of 760 x 330 x 120 mm. With the box removed the travel bag is revealed – again neatly rectangular, and with no indication (other than the Circe logo) that it's anything bike-related. It unzips all the way round to release the trailer itself.

As you'll see on the pictures, the folded trailer is an ingenious bit of packaging. The wheels sit within the

shape of the hinged load bed, with the frame parts below them, and the quick-release axles hold everything together. See the pictures for the full unfolding sequence: it all takes at most five minutes and it's really not



as you like up to 700c, but I think it's far to say it's happier at the smaller end. The drawbar simply swivels in its socket to provide the up-and-down adjustment, so when given enough 'rise' for full-size wheels it's a little limited in the steering lock that's left, and the hitch is at a somewhat awkward angle. It does still work OK, but it looked more comfortable to me behind the 20" wheels on my GoBike.

The unfolded trailer provides a useful cargo area of around 645 x 575 mm, although a 'maximum load area of 510 x 430 mm is quoted by Circe, presumably to be within the holes which function as tying-on points, and to stay well clear of the wheels. The load bed is nice and low between the 12" (203-54 size) wheels. The trailer's track is about 700 mm and overall width (across the axle release buttons) is 770 mm, so it'll go through most doorways. The wheels run on sealed bearings, and the tyres are rated to 40 psi. Weight of our trailer was 5.6 kg. The carry case weighs 480 g. The trailer is rated to carry 30 kg.

THE RIDE

I wasn't expecting any great surprises with the Atlas: two-wheeled trailers are typically well behaved, and this was no exception. Lightly loaded you can ride around hardly aware it's there. As with any trailer, though, you have to watch out for kerbs and bumps – those small wheels do perhaps bounce a bit more than larger ones over obstacles. But I never managed to flip it over, even empty: the resilience and damping of the hitch tends to keep it all upright.

For a more serious load test I strapped on a 25 litre (hence just over 25 kg when full) water container. You could certainly feel the weight of this, but it's a steady drag behind the bike and had little effect on handling. Fully loaded I could detect some drawbar flex when accelerating or

climbing – it 'pulses' back and forth a little – but nothing objectionable.

Talking of the drawbar, it did strike me that a great accessory would be a simple straight extension piece to go between drawbar and trailer for carrying longer loads. It could be made the same length as the folded package so it still fits in the carry case. Circe are considering the idea, they say.

CONCLUSIONS

So who should buy the Atlas? I see two main user groups: first are the occasional users or flat-dwellers who will appreciate how small and neatly the trailer stores away. This might also include the odd caravanner or boat owner with water barrels or the like to transport on occasion.

Second are folding bike riders looking for a trailer which also folds, perhaps on general principles and for the same storage reasons, but perhaps also for journeys in 'non cyclist mode', such as those involving train or plane travel. There are other trailers which compete here: the Radical Design Cyclone 'Chubby' is designed especially for Brompton owners, and along with the Carryfreedom City and Freeparable T2, it too folds for easy transport. The Radical is perhaps the most capable for touring with its larger wheels, while it's hard to beat the Freeparable for light weight. Each has its place.

But the Atlas strikes a very nice balance between complication and cost, between wheel size and storage size, and it's a design which will hit the sweet spot for many. I'd love that extra drawbar extension to make it even more versatile, but even without, it's a clever, quality trailer which I can only recommend.

Peter Eland

AVAILABLE FROM

Circe Cycles dealers and distributors: for details Tel 01954 782020 or see www.circecycles.com

UNFOLDING THE ATLAS

1 The Atlas comes with a useful Circe-branded strap.



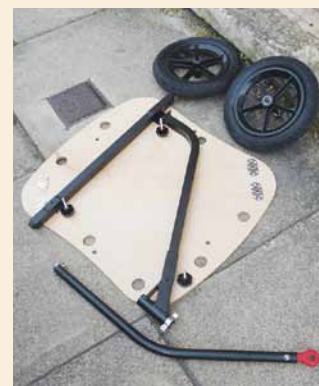
2 The folded package stands upright.



3 Lay the package on its side; its own weight will press onto the axle end buttons, releasing the locking balls and allowing you to fold out the trailer.



4 Now remove wheels and axles, and lay the parts in place.



5 The cross and diagonal beams interlock, then there are three thumbscrews to tighten the frame to the trailer bed. Next you just need to slide the drawbar into place. It secures with a quick release and is safety-locked by a spring clip. Finally, just add the wheels and you have a trailer!

