



Flat earth cycling



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The eZee Sprint's classic styling
makes it popular with all ages

Peta Stavelli takes the eZee electric bike for a spin and finds an elixir from the fountain of youth

I love to cycle. I love the freedom of it all: the feel of the wind in my hair and the sun on my back as I self-propel into a radiant and glorious future.

What a load of tosh!

What I actually love is the very idea of it all – the romance of cycling. The sort of cycling one does through pastoral France. A flat cycle ride on well-paved, if slightly rustic, roads through glowing fields of sunflowers, fresh from the boulangerie with a baguette in my basket.

Don't get me wrong. At my age I am acutely aware of the little aches and niggles that announce themselves (and a certain miserable decrepitude) if I do not build exercise into my daily life. I walk to work from the ferry. I own a bike. And I would like to tell you that I cycle as often as possible but it is not true.

I live on a ridge line and the steep ride down to the beach or Saturday market is a joy. The steep climb back up the hill with the groceries on board is pure drudgery. I cannot like it, as hard as I try.

Ditto my last commute to work on a bicycle, when I cycled 10km each way



The folding Quando is perfect for RVers



The Quando sets up and folds down in 15 seconds

around a glorious coastline on a well-paved path. It was exhilarating in good conditions but on days when there was a miserable head wind, I arrived at the office or the evening ferry red-faced and anxious for my personal hygiene – read puffy and sweaty.

Enter the eZee electric bike. If you're anything like me, you will initially dismiss the electric bike as a frippery – a soft version, not really cycling. Take my advice: do not even enter that avenue of thought. This is REAL cycling – without the hills. The power assist is only engaged when you need a little extra impetus; the rest of the time you cycle as normal.

My daughter, who has a passion for cycling, was the first to 'discover' the amenities of an electric bike. She bought a classically-styled Sprint 7L from the eZee line of electric bikes. It's the Rolls Royce of the eZee stable: an elegantly crafted bicycle that harks back to the glory days of cycling, when ladies in floral dresses rode from the grocers with their wicker baskets crammed with packages wrapped in brown paper and tied with string.

The Sprint does, in fact, come with a basket option but that is the least of its glories. Standard is a truly cushy spring-suspended seat, seven Shimano Nexus gears, lights, mudguards and a rear rack – which are often considered 'extras' in cheaper bikes – and puncture resistant tyres. It is sturdy as well as elegant and boy does it have some power.

When I was eventually persuaded to try it, my scepticism was immediately ceased: that little puppy just flew up the hill to the house. I have since tried the eZee Street and found it



eZee importer Jace Hobb's tall frame sits comfortably atop the popular Street

to be just as satisfactory and while lacking the classic styling of the Sprint, it is possibly better suited to my size (I am short) and commuter lifestyle. It is lighter and more compact than the Sprint and yet has all of the same bells and whistles as listed previously. All bikes are additionally equipped with disc brakes, double-walled rims, stainless steel spokes and lithium batteries that stand the test of time.

eZee bikes come with a 10-year warranty for the frame and two years for all other components and the manufacturers stand by their product.

The eZee bike has been around for more than 13 years now, with the factory dedicated to the making of electric bikes. The eZee has achieved elite status among electric bike owners and is frequently named as market leader in magazine tests, including those by exclusive *Conde Nast Traveller*.

I was not surprised to learn from Jace Hobbs, the New Zealand importer of these two-wheelers, that eZee bikes have been bought as a fleet bike by two councils – Palmerston North and Hamilton City – with a purchase by New Plymouth council also in the offing. It is also popular with small business owners, like service shops and fleet services companies, who have found it a fast and easy way to get around the city when picking up parts and parcels.

Jace came to New Zealand three years ago from his native North America. He started his Nelson-based business, Electric



eZee electric cycles add a new dimension to RV ownership

Bike Hub, after meeting and falling for a kiwi woman. After a lifetime living cheek by jowl with the sea in Hawaii and the Caribbean and being mostly taken with marine activities, Jace discovered a new passion for electric bikes, something which was fuelled by his desire to promote sustainable transport. He is also a member of Auckland Council's advisory committee for sustainable transport and the council has a 30-year plan for the rollout of electric vehicles.

Since taking over the franchise for eZee bikes two years ago, Jace has found that electric bikes suit all types of people and are

very popular with RV owners. In particular, the Quando electric bike stores very easily, folding to a compact size for storage in around 15 seconds.

Jace says, "They have amazing pep and hill-climbing ability and the 20" wheels make for a very smooth ride."

Sue Willan bought an eZee Sprint a year ago after she took to travelling in her 1987 Ford Trader camper-van when the February earthquake in Christchurch damaged her house, possibly beyond repair.

"Most of the time I live in the camper-van... I love to travel and have been as far

north as the Coromandel and Auckland and as far south as Bluff. I always take my electric bike with me," Sue says, adding that her bike keeps her exercising: "I get a workout without it being too hard. As I live in a hill suburb of Christchurch, I could no longer cycle home on an ordinary bicycle due to the steep hills.

"I also needed one I could easily get off and on my cycle rack. I had to change the cycle rack in order to do this and now it is easy, with not much lifting and I can manage it on my own.

"I prefer to have it mounted on the front of my camper-van so that it doesn't get so dirty and I can see it is safely in position as I travel.

Camper-van owner Sue Willan loves the added amenity of her electric bicycle



"As the electric bike is heavier than most bikes, it is important to get a suitable rack. With the previous rack, I had to lift the whole bike up which proved too difficult for me and I always had to get someone to help me," she continues.

Sue says she would never go back to an 'ordinary' bicycle: "You never know when a wind may pick up and with an electric bike it is not hard work. I had a lodger who cycled to work on an ordinary bicycle every day, from one end of the city to the other. He is very fit. One day on the way home, as I was cycling back up Mt Pleasant Hill, I actually passed him on my electric bicycle. He arrived home all sweaty and out of breath and I arrived as though I had just been on a leisurely bike ride," she adds.

Sue highly recommends the combination of a camper-van and electric bike: "It is ideal for cycling in scenic spots as well as going shopping in a town/city. I can easily cycle 60km, including a 10-minute steep hill climb to finish with, and not feel exhausted by the end of it." ■

For more information,
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