EZoomers
a zine for NZ ebike enthusiasts

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Aussies e-bike across South Island

Maurice and Kaitlin, from Australia, have done what few of us attempt to do on our own turf. They toured from Nelson down to Canterbury, across the beautiful Lewis pass, and all with smiles and zero breakdowns.

This is a challenge going out to NZ riders. We now have larger capacity batteries than these two used, great e-bikes that can go the distance and every opportunity to enjoy the ride in a brand new way.

Let's do some grand touring routes on our e-bikes. The bikes can do it if you will.

It may seem daunting at first but it is really not that difficult once you get stuck into it. Your sense of distance and speed will change over the first day and after that you will feel like you are flying along and making great progress because you are a true biker, albeit with a great assist factor from your trusty e-bike.

Maurice used our Torq model and Kaitlin did the trip on a step-thru' Sprint 7L. These bikes are veteran continent crossers that have earned the trust of their owners when setting off on adventurous routes.

There are many other routes in NZ that are waiting for the first e-riders to summit and conquer, if you want to look at it that way.

We can't have Aussies shaming us with their exploits on this side of the ditch, can we?

Consider a little adventure; go further than you ever thought you would, because you can now that reliable e-bikes are on our shores.

We dare you!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Did you know?

New Zealand is building bike infrastructure at an astounding rate and will become a mecca of off-road bike routes in the next several years. Those of us who live here will benefit from all these free bike routes.

Did you know?

Hire e-bike hire service are starting up in many places in NZ. Already you can rent e-bikes in many locations and see the area in a zero-emission fashion.

Besides the immediate value of having a handy vehicle at your disposal for the rental period, it allows you to experiment with fitting an e-bike into your lifestyle.

It's a cheap way to get the full experience of what an e-bike can do for you, and to get over that cheating feeling.

How to Buy Value in Your E-bike Purchase

People buying an electric bike want three things:

- long, reliable service
- a bike that will take them significant distances
- a bike that doesn't break down

There is much that can be said about purchasing an e-bike given those requirements.

Some assume that if pictures of products look the same, they probably are the same. Typically, Chinese factories produce products that look like another product that has given good service in the EU, but is made with much less care and component quality, so that it can be sold for a lower price. This is the strategy used to get purchasers in under a certain price. Often the price is the only aspect that is attractive about the bike. Sometimes ads for these e-bikes are notable for what they leave out rather than what they promote. They will list alloy wheels or stainless spokes, but both are available in such low quality that the buyer is buying trouble down the road.

Perhaps nowhere is this so evident than in the battery purchase. The typical cheap battery will be made under manufacturing conditions that would appall you, often with materials that are inadequately sourced, handled and assembled. There are any number of Chinese battery makers that will be in business for only a short time, sometimes because they have bought some other battery company that just went out of business. Their guarantee is useless and the battery will at best be safe to use. It will not give long life or good performance. Typically, these are sold in NZ from new importers out of a garage and on Trade Me, but not in bike shops that depend on their reputation.

Despite this, there are several good e-bikes companies competing against each other in the EU market. Their product quality will be quickly ascertained by testers and the public, and any less than satisfactory performance will be quickly publicized, often leading to the end of their company. All of these companies will be competing for an international reputation and product distribution. These are the only companies worth purchasing from and even then you should pick one that looks like it will be around in several years to offer you parts - a critical matter.

It can be hard to make this distinction without being an expert, but bike shops are often the perfect choice to help with discerning the quality difference. Bike shop owners are primarily concerned with the customer being happy and referring them to other customers. They look into component quality that most people cannot easily recognise. My suggestion is to pick a shop that has been around a long while and has a good reputation. They will make sure you are getting the promise that e-bikes offer. You will pay more than Trade Me prices and you will get more. You will get value.

Are e-bikes safer on the roads?

On the face of it, that sounds unlikely as the bike is going faster and is arguably more complex to operate. Suspend that logic for a second as I point out some other considerations.

1. Most accidents happen at intersections and the less time you spend in the intersections or crossing the road, the less you are exposed to danger there. E-bikes with a throttle allow you to zoom off and avoid a wobbly slow start.

2. Bicyclists on hill climbs tend to wobble when riding. This steering issue is further aggravated by cargo loads on the bike. E-bikes track straighter up hills because the extra speed adds to stable steering.

3. Starting off with a load of groceries or going uphill is difficult on a conventional bike. Using the throttle to lift the bike to steering speed makes this wobbly part of cycling a breeze.

4. Many cyclists find the shortest route to their destination is not always the safest route. There may be another route that has a hill or two but which has much less exposure to traffic. With the e-bike, the extra distance or hill climbs are not daunting. They will easily be accomplished with the power assist making for a safer ride.

I argue that e-bikes are safer over the long haul, don't you agree?

Sprint owner tops 7000 km

Peter from Marton reports in that he has done over 7000 km on his Sprint since getting it 3 years ago. Peter writes:

"We don't use our car anymore; only the electric bike and a trailer which I use to drop my daughter off at school everyday and to get groceries in. The electric bike is great for towing the trailer even with fairly heavy loads, and believe me I do push it!! I am still on my original tyres and everything else is doing pretty well. The eZee is certainly a well made bicycle and well worth the investment."

I love it when someone dumps their car because they find their e-bike both practical and economical.

Torq owner tops 10000 km in a year Stephen writes to say that he went more than 10000km this year on his Torq Alfine and all on one set of Marathon-Plus tyres. He had only one puncture! Stephen says he is very happy with the bike and tyres.

New Caledonia success with Sprint fleet

The success of New Caledonia e-bike fleet has led to its projected expansion to fourteen Sprint L e-bikes.

The Ministry there writes that the bikes have been better than projected and that the acceptance by the target user group has lessened the need for bus travel.

That follows the successful rental fleet on the Dunedin Peninsula showing that real work with real people can achieve real savings if done right.

The e-bikes have to be reliable and easy to use. They can't be prone to chains falling off or other similar mishaps that require staff time and lost economy.

Several of the shops that sell our bikes will start rental fleets as well this summer, so there's broad acceptance that this is a fixture in the transportation mix in NZ. That is music to my green-leaning ears.

EBH bikes in NZ page

Summit summited

Petra and Andrew report that they rode their eZee bikes from Motueka to the top of the Takaka hill and back which is a total elevation gain of over 800m and a long ride at the base as well. This was with 15 amp hour batteries.

Council bikes on track

Palmerston North City Council reports that the reason they had not contacted the eZee offices in the last two years, is because there had been no problems with their fleet of four bikes. They use them all the time, says the current project manager.

eZee produces full suspension mt. bike

The Raptor project is in the final stages and will produce a very highly speced full suspension mountain bike that will sell for about half what comparable Aussie models currently are priced at. This will not be for everyone, but the componentry and power will attract a certain kind of user, as is evidenced by their popularity elsewhere.

EBH eZee gear news.

The former 14 amp hour batteries are now re-rated to 15 ah after the new Sony cells were introduced. The former 20 is now a 21 amp hour battery and the first two 28 amp hour batteries hit the NZ streets in the recent shipment. Look for more of these remarkable over 1000 watt hour batteries as production hits stride at the eZee factory. The new cells are really making a difference in distances traveled and projected lifespan of the batteries. The prices have stayed the same so more battery for the same price,… is that a price reduction?

New products

We have sourced a bar that allows the step thru' bikes to hang on a conventional bike rack. Until now we have not found one strong enough. We will sell these separately for $45 but include them with new Sprint 7L sales at no extra cost.

eZee Kinetic will produce a bakfeit (forward cargo box) cargo bike this year, to round out the world beating value in this kind of bike. This box bike with room for two kids or significant cargo in front of the rider is very popular in Europe, the prime market, but will be available in NZ as well. it opens the door to delivering kids in a very personal way and they just love riding at the front of the parade, so to speak.

eZoomers -NZ News and views on electric bikes

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Please pass this newsletter on to anyone who would like to get it.

Your next bike could be an e-bike

We encourage submissions about e-bikes and issues surrounding e-bikes for publication in subsequent issues of EZoomers. Simply drop an email to Jace Hobbs and your ideas or article may well find its way to the NZ e-bike community.

Where to put the E-bike Battery

Typically, batteries on e-bikes are in one of two places: on the rear rack area, or low in the centre of the frame. The difference is dramatic for the rider. Top-heavy riding is one of the least attractive aspects of e-bike usage and the more you add to this with your cargo and your own body weight, the worse it gets. Quite a number of manufacturers do put the battery on the rear rack because it allows the use of a standard bike frame to be converted for their product but it is a poor placement for centre of gravity and distribution of weight between the wheels. Manufacturing a standard bike frame and strapping the battery into a carrier mount is quite a bit cheaper than making a special e-bike frame with the mounts or tracks for the battery.

Batteries are heavy and the bigger the capacity of the battery, even lithium batteries, the heavier they are. Batteries also need to be protected from accidents, so the frame should offer the battery a cage to ride in. All this adds weight and that will be important to you, the rider.

You will pay a bit more for e-bikes that have well formed supports for the battery, and you should be willing to pay the extra, as this is the most important aspect to ensure a long life for an e-bike battery.

eZee pioneered the behind the seat post location for the battery back in 2003, and that has been widely copied. When WW Ching came out with his Torq with the low mounted battery behind the seat post, it was a sensation in the industry. It allowed control at higher speeds and was a determining factor in winning of the three Tour de Prestiegne races riding the eZee Torq.

Special consideration should be given to bikes meant to ride off-road or bikes intended to be heavily loaded. The low centre of gravity of the bike is especially crucial here and should be a primary consideration. Navigating hairpin turns on mountain tracks will immediately convince you of the importance of battery placement issues. The centre of gravity of the bike really comes into play at those times and it can be the difference between control and being out of control. You no doubt care about riding your bike in control - always a good look!

In summary, your e-bike battery should be located in or around the centre of the bike, as low as possible. This puts weight on the front wheel as well as the back wheel and will make for better steering, better feel, and ultimately, better safety.

Balance is needed when going up steep streets, like this pic of going up Baldwin Street in Dunedin, and balance is gained by having the weight low and to the centre as shown in this photo. BTW, 50 year old Mac Robertson climbed the street four times for the press that day.