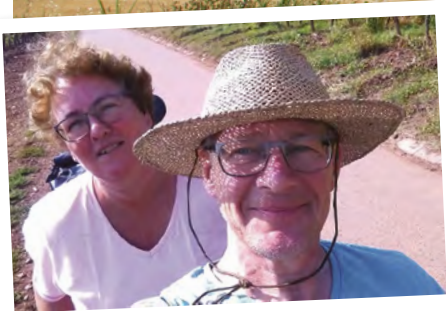


Holiday on bike

for those who hesitate



By Peter and Anneke
van de Steeg

Last year, in our mid fifties, we had our first cycling holiday ever. With the Nazca Quetzal. A superb recumbent tandem.

With a special tool, made by Henk, the Quetzal can be transported safe and stable on a standard bicycle rack mounted on the towbar. The first unfolding of that strange looking "whatever" on the back of the car took some time. This only increased our satisfaction at the moment our tandem was ready to start our adventure.

Starting in Mainz, Germany, we followed a beautiful part of the river Rhine to Koblenz and from there we cycled alongside the river Moselle till Traben-Trarbach. From here we went back to Mainz where we left our car at a friendly winery that we visited before taking of. 700 km in ten days. For starters like us it was a perfect track.

We encountered excellent, flat, bike paths and clear signage to follow. Bare in mind however, that, the moment you leave the riverbank, slopes can get steep. And whether you stay in a hotel, a BnB or "zimmer frei", they are not all located at the riverbank.



We had no other plan than starting the day with a good breakfast, cycle until we felt it was enough and find a place to stay. For me it was ultimate freedom, no plans, no schemes, no place to be at the end of the day. Nothing. Just cycle until your legs tell you to stop, and you know what? Both, pilot and stoker, at least in our case, mostly agreed when that moment was about to come. That's one of the characteristics of a tandem: you both deliver what you are able to and stay together.

We, the bike and our luggage had a joint weight of 230 kg. There has not been one moment, not a split second, that we got the feeling it was too much for the Quetzal. Whether creeping uphill with 7 km/h or downhill with 52 km/h, riding on cobblestones, a dirt road or smooth asphalt the Nazca Quetzal felt safe, stable and comfortable.

Once in a while we needed to leave the safe bike path and blend in with all other traffic. To be honest, in the beginning it was a bit scary. But soon we found out that not only we were able to manage the bike quite well but also all other traffic took us into account. Hurray for mankind!

So, even in heavy city traffic the manoeuvrability of the Quetzal made us feel secure and comfortable.

If you don't like being noticed, stop reading, buy a grey standard bicycle and ride along with the majority. Because riding a Quetzal will attract people's attention. >>





What we heard during our ten days, sometimes while cycling, sometimes while taking a break:

Mann, das ist ja Spitzenklasse

So macht man das

Schickes Rad haben Sie da

During one stop a German engineer (that's what he said he was) researched the Quetzal closely and came to the conclusion that it must have been a top tier engineer being responsible for construction and design.

Was für ein tolles Werkzeug habt Ihr da!

Geil!

Or just thumbs up and a smile on the face.

Tuscany

Having experienced this, we decided to try a different approach this year in a different landscape. Tuscany, Italy. Having a fixed place to stay and making trips from there.

Don't be mistaken by the beautiful sloping landscape you see on pictures. True, it is a mesmerizing landscape, that begs you to take a picture every five minutes. But while being charming, it can also be mean and steep. And that is where our secret weapon comes in. Our Quetzal is equipped with an E-motor. It is our ambition to do as much of the work as possible on our own, testing our bodies, but having an escape is a calming thought. Whatever happens, we will get back home.

The Nazca Quetzal E-type (as we call it) took us almost everywhere. We used a very detailed map to navigate (Kompass). Unfortunately the definition of "road" appeared to be quite broad. So we and our Quetzal experienced sand, gravel (fine and very coarse), tall grass, and many more "road" surfaces. Never a dull moment. But always feeling in control.

Italians are used to bikes on the road. Even on the main roads where big trucks are cruising and the Italian need for speed is tangible we never felt threatened. They kept their distance and were patient. Nevertheless, we preferred the smaller roads through the countryside with the above mentioned risk of encountering paths most suitable for mountain bikes. The Quetzal proved to stand heavy duty.

As you might know, Italians are passionate about cycling. On every trip we made we encountered cyclists. Some of them looking and then pretending to ignore us, but mostly we got positive reactions. Imagine you're fighting uphill, sweat drips from your faces, your hearts beat like they've never done before, you wonder if you're going to reach the top and a ciclista with fancy clothes, mirrored glasses, shaved and well-oiled shiny legs (you know the picture) is descending that same hill with high speed. Concentration all over his face. He sees you, gets himself in a upright position, figuratively takes his helmet off and yells "Bravo". A short moment of relaxation, even a smile, on his face. Then you know you're going to reach the top.

Of course, there are people having issues with the extraordinary but let the grumbles stay with the grumblers. We only perceived and enjoyed admiration, thumbs up and smiling faces. And "bravo", "aller, aller, aller" and "bicicletta bellissima!" >>



When you see the sign "strada deformata" you'd better buckle up and prepare for a bumpy ride (no sign, however, does not guarantee a smooth pavement...). In these situations you appreciate the manoeuvrability to avoid holes and the excellent working suspension of the Nazca Quetzal. Going downhill we were glad to have the big hydraulic brake discs. If you ever expect to cycle in mountainous areas don't be a cheapskate and invest in good brakes.

After the first week we discovered that starting every trip from the same point makes the world small and we felt the urge to make a trip in another part of Tuscany. So we took our Quetzal on the bicycle rack to different places. Folding and fixing the bike on the rack has become a smooth process for two people, and now takes up to 15 minutes.



Next year

So last year we travelled as luxury Nomads from bed to bed. This year we had the same bed for two weeks. Next year? We'll see, but it will probably be a hybrid.

Lessons learned

- Enjoy the beautiful landscape and picturesque villages as much as the bike.
- Take a break now and then. In the end the mileage will be at least the same.
- Communicate about shifting gears, especially uphill.
- Going Nomad? No worries, you will always find a place to stay at the end of the day, including a secure place for your bike. If they don't have a garage or shed, you're invited to put it in the hallway.
- Use your E-support with sense. It's not build to take over your job and drag you uphill. When you do your job, it will support you to get there.



A year ago we would never have thought about cycling together, let alone a holiday on a recumbent tandem. Today, our last day in Tuscany, we realize how lucky we are that we had the opportunity to test the Nazca Quetzal. It really is a great ride! And it's great to do it together. True, we don't have any references, we only tried the Quetzal. We didn't need references because it was love on first sight.

Still hesitating? Don't. Do yourself a favour, call Nazca for a test ride and you'll be convinced, without a doubt.

Have fun!

