

+ ON TEST

Hase Bikes Klimax



What, you might well ask, is that? The answer might just be the most futuristic electric bike we've ever featured. Can the Hase Klimax define a new category of weatherproof, comfortable commuter vehicles? We tried it to find out...

Hase Bikes in Germany are a well established supplier of all sorts of unusual cycles, and also of a rather excellent set of cycle adaptations for people with disabilities. With their Klimax 2K, which complies with all of the usual electric bike legislation (250 W, 15 mph) they're ambitiously aiming to create a new class of vehicle with more weatherproofing, comfort and performance than a bike, but still staying orders of magnitude lighter and less ecologically damaging than a car.

Sadly, it isn't cheaper than a car, as the UK recommended retail price is £4945. Ours was also supplied with the additional 'Poncho' (an extra £150). Hase have several UK dealers, and a Klimax could be ordered through any of them. As we go to press, however, the only demonstrator machine in the country is at London Recumbents in Dulwich Park.

The machine is based around one of Hase's trikes, which offers a comfortable mesh seat, drive to both

back wheels via a differential, and twin disk brakes. To this has been added a Protanium front wheel motor, with a 10 Ah, 26 V battery pack tucked in a holder below the seat, and a basic handlebar display attached to one handlebar end. Spare battery packs cost an astonishing £610.

So far, it's a conventional enough electric-assisted trike. The unique addition for the Klimax is the folding fairing. The idea is that if the weather is favourable you can simply ride the trike bare, with no fairing to obstruct your view, or to get in the way as you get on or off. Then, if rain threatens, you can unzip that rear bag and attach the fairing in seconds. This keeps most of the weather off your body and legs, and will be fine for showers. For heavier rain you can add the poncho, which attaches on to the rear edge of the fairing and covers your body, with a hole for your head. There's a fabric splashguard to prevent water reaching you from below, too.

It all adds up to an impressively



ABOVE: The battery is neatly mounted low down on one side.

BELOW: Either edge of the fairing quickly detaches for getting in and out.



weatherproof package, and you stay remarkably dry and warm within the fabric 'cocoon'. Even without the poncho the fairing keeps the cold wind off you. I was happy riding in moderate rain wearing just a fleece, and generally it frees you from needing to wear 'special clothes'. And the fairing is superbly designed and made: it clicks together in instants and collapses back down into its bag in seconds. One 'edge' can simply be clicked off to allow you to get in and out.

On the road, once you've dodged the questions from bystanders, the Klimax will be a revelation in comfort for those who haven't tried this format of trike before. Sitting in the seat your neck and wrists are relaxed, and the steering is very light and easy.

The electric assist is of the rotation sensor type, so it only kicks in after half a pedal stroke or so. After that it'll carry on putting in whichever level of power you've selected on the control console so long as you keep moving your legs – there's no need to

put in any effort. The motor was quiet but not silent. It pulled smoothly, but even at top power it seemed a little lacking in 'grunt', and pedal assistance was needed on significant hills.

So does it all add up to the urban transport revolution Hase are hoping for? For me it didn't really hit the spot. The main reason was nothing to do with the trike itself – it was more that I didn't dare leave it parked unattended around town, ruling it out for most of my journeys. I also preferred to be anonymous on a more 'normal' bike. And perhaps it just seemed like overkill: for shorter urban trips the comfort aspect is less relevant, and it doesn't rain so much here in York that occasionally wearing waterproofs is a problem.

But I can easily imagine other circumstances when it would be just the ticket as a car replacement. Plenty of bike-friendly places in mainland Europe spring to mind. It could also work well in rural areas, perhaps for people going car-free who have longer distances to cover, and all weathers to cope with – and

who have stopping places where casual vandalism is less likely. Or on tour, when getting wet can be more than an inconvenience, it could be a welcome shelter as well as a vehicle.

It might also be very attractive for some more elderly riders. The seat is easy to get yourself onto and off even if you're not so agile, and the protection of the fairing might be welcome for old bones which feel the cold.

There are some criticisms to be made, though. With its small battery, basic control and moderate power delivery the electric assist system seems outdated, especially given the price of the Klimax. In other respects you



BELOW LEFT: There's a basic control for the electrics on one handlebar end.

BELOW: The fairing keeps the weather off your legs and front. When not in use it tucks away into the bag between the rear wheels. Also note that lights, mirror and mudguards are all fitted.



do get a lot of bike for your money: the trike chassis, and the fairing, are all beautifully engineered. But at £4945, the Klimax 2K is a significant investment in anyone's book. This price pits it against a whole slew of transport competitors: from rail season tickets to small cars and motorbikes.

Hase have won many design awards with the Klimax, and deservedly so. It's extending electric bikes into new territory – it may not be for everyone, but it might just be a uniquely useful solution for some.

Peter Eland

» AVAILABILITY

Manufacturer: Hase Bikes, Germany. Tel 0049 23 09 93770 or see www.hasebikes.com

Hase have many dealers in the UK and beyond: see their website for details. Our test trike was kindly supplied by JD Tandems, Gargrave. Tel 01756 748400 or see www.tandems.co.uk.

A demo bike is available at London Recumbents: Tel 020 8299 6636 or see www.londonrecumbents.com

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