Mountain Trike

Mountain biking is a relatively new sport, first mentioned in print in the USA in 1966, BMX came later in 1972, so it's not before time that the first true 'Mountain Trike' for disabled people has finally hit the market.

Recent disability exhibitions have been hugely successful for the boys from Bath(Tim & Ed, designers of the new Mountain Trike) even though they did get their wrists slapped by organisers at one event who accused them of leaving muddy tyre tracks on the carpet. This isn't all that surprising since at first glance the Mountain Trike looks more like a mountain bike than a wheelchair; not so much because of the shape (that's still like a wheelchair) but in terms of 'personality'. The Mountain Trike utilises mountain bike wheels and other parts from high end cycles too.

It's little wonder it's had such positive feedback at developmental stage from injured mountain bikers looking for an upgraded wheelchair experience. Tim tells me that whenever it's being used people, disabled and non-disabled alike badger him for a crack at it.

The Mountain Trike feels at home on even the toughest of terrain.

FIRMLY ROOTED, EVEN ON CAMBER

Incredibly it's just 20Kg in weight and whilst it can skip across wet sand in the tide line at the beach it is robust enough to tackle dense woodland and can even stray onto some mountain bike tracks. Much of this is down to the three independent shock absorbers; one for each of the drive wheels and one on the small wheel at the back. These keep the Mountain Trike firmly rooted even on camber up to around 15 degrees.

Surprisingly the back wheel is where the steering takes place. This allows for a more solid ride as well as retaining wheelchair-style usefulness. If the third wheel was positioned at the front it would be difficult to draw up to a table for example whilst in the field it provides a handy anti-tip device that's particularly advantageous when travelling uphill. Two small wheels at the front become grounded only when the Trike is in jeopardy of falling forwards.

Whilst the brawn is in the wheels, the thinking is in the levers. Each can be used to 'row' both wheels forward and either or both can be fitted with a brake. Even so, when they are not engaged they act as brakes themselves providing a rest for aching wrists after a long hill climb without the need to hold a brake grip closed. The levers provide greater efficiency than other lever drive chairs since they operate on a 'bicycle chain' system that changes the pivot point away from the centre of the wheels allowing for a more efficient stroke.

PATENTS AND INNOVATIONS

Steering is really simple and requires no tricky leaning and minimal hand strength. A 'joystick' on one of the levers turns the Trike left or right from the back wheel and can achieve a 360 almost on its own footprint. The same lever has a grip brake that controls both wheels equally to counter skidding and rolling although some customers have requested for one on each lever to allow them pull stunts or make more precise turns at speed. The small clip that can hold the brake in place is actually one of four patents held by Mountain Trike such is the innovation that this thing carries on its simple looking aluminium frame.

Nods to wheelchairs seen elsewhere include adjustable seating options and retractable footplate allowing for easy transfer from domestic wheelchair and at £3,995 it's competitive with the best from other manufacturers.

Each Mountain Trike will clearly live a tough existence and is covered by a warranty, beyond that the designers tell me that (with any problems,) although the local cycle shop might well be able to help, they'd rather see it themselves to get a better understanding of where the next developments will be needed. The overall aim is that just as in mountain biking, the Trike will be upgradable allowing for extras to be added on to suit.

I've seen some beautiful indoor wheelchairs and I've seen some great outdoor handcycles but until this morning, nothing in between. It's taken 45 years of mountain bike development and two guys with engineering knowhow to put the Mountain Trike together. It was well worth the wait.

More:
http://www.mountaintrike.co.uk

RDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AWARDS :: ABLE AW