

Vielo

R+1 Alto

Open your mind and look into the future

I'm just going to come right out and say it: 1x gearing is the future for road bikes. Mark my words. This has been the case for mountain bikes for years, cyclocross too, and while there are undeniably some situations within road riding where a 1x drivetrain can present limitations – mainly racing at WorldTour level – for the majority of us, less is more.

I've been riding 1x as my preferred gearing on the road for a long while now, and I've lost count of the times I've had to defend the system against people who claim that it is unsuitable for road bikes. So here's my reasoning...

Pros not cons

Firstly 1x is lighter, obviously, given there's one fewer chainring and no need for a front derailleur, cabling or shift lever. Consequently there is also less to maintain. Aerodynamics are improved and aesthetically the bike is less cluttered. A case in point is this Vielo R+1, which just looks so beautifully clean thanks to the way the 1x pairs so well with bike's complete integration.

Plus there's the simplicity of it all. As far as gear selection goes it's either harder gear or easier gear. There's no ambiguity, no

overlapping ratios, no cross-chaining – just upshifts and downshifts.

Ah, say the naysayers, but what about the range of gears on a 1x system? With just a single 44 or 46-tooth chainring the bike simply won't be fast enough. Well, let's do the maths.

With 700c wheels and 30mm tyres, a bike pedalled at a cadence of 90rpm with a 44x10 highest gear on 1x system would have a speed of 51.1kmh. By comparison, 28mm tyres and a 50x11 highest gear on a compact 2x groupset equals 51.5kmh. Pretty close.

The key is understanding the substantial impact of a 10t sprocket, as found on many 1x groupsets. Campagnolo's 13-speed Ekar cassette even has a 9t, which would mean the chainring size could drop to 40t for the same speed. Essentially, 'going fast enough' is not an issue with 1x unless you're a WorldTour sprinter.

The truth is, if you pick the right size of chainring to suit your ability and style of riding, you'll be perfectly well served by 1x and need never make a front shift again. To make this as easy as possible, Vielo generously supplies the R+1 with two chainrings (in sizes of your choice, from 38t to 50t) and it is but a five-minute job to switch them if required. ●

The spec

Model Vielo R+1Alto

Price £6,999

Weight 7.54kg (medium)

Groupset Sram Force eTap AXS HRD

Deviations Vielo 1x chainring (48t)

Wheels Zipp 303S

Finishing kit Vielo one-piece carbon bar/stem, Vielo carbon seatpost, Fabric Scoop Pro saddle, Schwalbe Pro One 30mm tubeless tyres

Contact vielo.cc

Highlights

- 1 The seatstays divide opinion aesthetically but they give the bike an identity on top of delivering some aero gains
- 2 The 1x haters are gonna hate, but we say it's the future for the road, not just gravel
- 3 Vielo's own-design carbon integrated cockpit delivers great ergonomics, decent height adjustment and clean looks





Pick of the kit

Giro Agilis Mips helmet, £89.99, zyrofisher.co.uk

Giro's Agilis Mips helmet is a bit like Shimano's 105 groupset – it has a good number of high-quality features borrowed directly from flagship products yet costs a great deal less.

At £90 the Agilis Mips is well under half the cost of Giro's top-of-the-line helmets, but still benefits from a sleek shell with 32 vents for decent ventilation, and it only weighs 280g. Thanks to Giro's superb Roc-Loc 5.5 fit/adjustment system I've found it to be every bit as comfortable to wear as helmets costing twice (even thrice) as much.

All gearing protestations aside, here's another benefit I bet you didn't know that 1x can deliver. Having to precisely place a front derailleur on the seat tube and allow clearance for a pair of chainrings is actually a major constraint to frame design, so a frame with no such provision can be approached with more freedom, something Vielo has leveraged fully in the R+1.

The bottom bracket is wider than normal, providing a broader platform for the seat tube, down tube and chainstays to converge, and now this juncture can be more symmetrical too, which Vielo says results in a 30% increase in lateral stiffness.

The seat tube angle is quite steep at 74.25° and also with the tube shape sculpted to allow the rear wheel to tuck in tightly behind it means the chainstays can be shorter, just 400mm, which is impressive for a disc brake bike.

That compact rear end and the solidity of the R+1 build is palpable out on the road. The bike's

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unwavering response to my each and every attack or sprint was to surge forwards, channelling every last watt with a resolute dedication to delivering speed. The excitable way it accelerates, and indeed ascends, is ably assisted by its reasonable weight. The frame is a claimed 880g and this complete bike weighs in at 7.54kg.

Covering all the angles

The 71.25° head tube angle stands out for me on the geometry chart. It's unusually slack, but when paired with a 48mm fork offset the resulting handling is hard to fault. The level of reactivity and feedback is beautifully balanced, with stability and stiffness aplenty to make it entirely dependable and predictable.

Additional control is afforded by the R+1's 30mm tyres. Those big boots also do a great job of absorbing the worst of the road buzz and ultimately are the reason the R+1 can remain acceptably comfortable despite its abundant frame stiffness.

For my money Vielo has created one of the best looking, and one of the best riding, road bikes I have ever had the pleasure to test. And if it feels like I've spent most this review defending the manufacturer's decision to make the R+1 1x-specific, it's only because I know how many riders still struggle to accept a road bike with a single chainring.

To them I say: open your minds. This, folks, is the future. 🚲

Alternatively...



Same meat, different gravy

Vielo's R+1 Strato retains the key frame features of the Alto, but a different grade of carbon and a traditional bar/stem reduces cost. The Shimano GRX mechanical model is £3,899.



More versatility

Vielo's V+1 UD was the bike the company was founded upon, capable of extending your riding exploits far beyond the road, and no slouch whether it's rough or smooth. From £5,299 with Sram Force.

Gearing aside, a 1x specific bike can have a wider bottom bracket and more symmetry in this critical juncture of the seat tube, down tube and chainstays, significantly increasing lateral stiffness