

INTO THE RIDE #69

Stratus 700

The Legend Continues...

by Randy Schlitter



The Stratus has been one of the longest running production bents, and while it has evolved, it still retains a solid identity as the original long wheelbase recumbent. And as long wheel base bents go, it is becoming the “form” to follow, as we see many other bent makers adopting the bike's geometry and even the frame's exact structural layout. It is nice to have created something so elegant, and such a great design that others strive to imitate. As Stratus copies join the party it only confirms this classic, and fires up demand for the bike. What we do best is to keep refining the bike, and increasing quality, value, and selection.



For 2009 there will be a new addition to the Stratus line up, which has grown to include the Stratus LE, Stratus XP, Stratus XP AL, and Stratus XP TI. The newcomer the Stratus 700 is more retro than new; the main difference is a 700c rear wheel. The return of the bigger wheel was prompted by customer requests. Since all our assembly is done in Hays Kansas, we can be more accommodating; the complexity of managing a diverse line stays literally within an arms reach.



The other change is to the rear dropouts. The highly proven dropouts on the Stratus XP have found their way into the Stratus. They allow more chain clearance and a disc brake mount, all at a few grams less weight. Up to 700x 35 mm tires should fit, and leave room for a fender. You can even have a third brake option if you use a long reach caliper on the fender mount tube.



Already in stock is the Stratus LE XL in the blue and silver colors with the 700 rear wheel and new drops. When these have sold out we should have the new 700 version in stock. The Stratus 700 will be distinguished by a red and silver paint job, and available only in the XL size. It will also feature an upgraded rear derailleur. The Stratus 700 comes nicely equipped and ready to roll.

2009 will represent an unusual jump in retail prices for all bike makers. The price increase should come as no surprise since the cost of everything, including the kitchen sink, has gone up. In our case many raw materials have increased to as much as 40% over last year. The impact on our retail prices will be from 15% to 20% higher over 2008.

Riding the Stratus 700 will reveal a stable fast bike, with a bit more shock-absorbing ride. The larger wheel and longer frame of the XL size combine to give it that famous plush ride. The handling still feels like a Stratus, but slightly different, as different in a good sense. It is a hard to quantify, due to the larger rear wheel, tire sizes, or slight change to head angle. Either way dealers have been reporting very positive feedback.

Why buy the XL size when the standard will fit fine? In most cases longer is better, and such is the case for the Stratus 700, only the very short rider may find the bike a reach. However...if this project is successful, we may offer a standard size later in the season, and bring back the XL size to the LE program.

Of course with the 700c wheel gear inches are higher, and with the 28mm profile tires, the higher gearing seems needed. We think the stock tires will please most, even with the smaller profile, and higher pressure, again it is the larger wheel and longer wheel base that sets up the plush ride. As far as carrying on the legend of the Stratus, we feel the 700 will do that quite well! Look for more details about up and coming changes for 2009 in future ITR's. Thanks for stopping in, and until next month, ride safe, and stay into the ride!

SUMMARY

- Stratus LE in the XL size in stock now
- Stratus 700 in XL size in stock mid-October
- Stratus 700 features red and silver paint scheme, new drop outs, 700 rear wheel, canti, disc and long reach road brake features on the frame
- Stratus LE offered in standard size only, returns in '09 with same silver and blue paint scheme

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