

INTO THE RIDE #92

Xstream XL

by Randy Schlitter



The success of the Xstream has prompted us to develop a version for the taller rider. At first, this seemed a simple stretch to an existing bike. However, further study indicated a more complex approach was required. The Xstream is a long bike even in its standard size. It has become known for the supple ride and great overall speed and climbing ability, and this is the pedigree that had to be preserved in the XL version. Winning RAAM 2009 boosted sales for this efficient bike, and broke the paradigm that fast recumbents had to be short wheel base.

A long wheel base bike frame is essentially a truss between two points, and often a fairly shallow truss at that. To keep such a truss from being too flexurally compliant, large sized tubes are used. Large diameter tubing also has the benefit of being stiff in torsion. To make a longer Xstream, we stayed with the large 2" main tube but bumped up to 1.5" tubes on the bottom frame tube. This added torsional stiffness without decreasing vertical compliance, but the chain routing was affected by the stretch, requiring the crossover idler to change location. Even with these changes, the bike holds true to the form of the Xstream we know and love.

All this for only 3 inches, but it's worth it -- the frame has the same ride. In fact, I almost prefer the longer bike! The road shock is even more subdued, and I can lay my seat way back to slice the wind.

A longer wheelbase might impact the slow speed handling, but so far I cannot tell much difference. This must be partially due to the T-bar set up we use on the Xstream 26. The only drawback is some line-of-sight issues when laying the seat to a max shallow angle. I really like the T-bar, as it offers complete freedom of movement with no worry of contacting the knees. Being able to move with such freedom makes any additional tiller effect less hampering.

Hopefully this additional size range will allow those taller riders to experience this fun bike. Availability is anywhere from in-stock to 3 to 4 weeks. This frame is built at our Hays factory, right along with the standard Xstream. There is no increase in cost to go with the XL size and colors will be as per the color called out for a particular model of Xstream.

Thanks for stopping by, and here's to hoping you have had a great summer riding season. Until next month, ride safe and stay into the ride!

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