

CLASSIC DRIVER

Tokyobike

Lead

Getting around on a pushbike used to mean you were either too young to drive or too impecunious to afford a more impressive means of transport – but not any more, writes Simon de Burton.

City cycling is as cool as it gets these days, as evinced by the booming sales of high-end, traditional bikes of the type made by Pashley.

But while Pashley is more than 85 years old, an upstart brand from Japan is making impressive inroads among trendy urban cyclists throughout Europe with its aptly named 'Tokyobike' range, which was conceived in 2002 as a swift, efficient and hip way of negotiating the notoriously traffic-clogged capital.

A Tokyobike is simply a traditional, sit-up-and-beg machine on a more compact scale than usual. Its 650mm-diameter wheels and slim frame tubes help keep weight down to just 10kg and ensure the bikes are light and easy to manoeuvre. Tokyobikes also appeal to design junkies, thanks to their quality fittings and the impressive range of unusual colour schemes in which they are available; apparently the new 'saffron' (below, as a single-speed) finish is going down a storm.



And now the brand has opened its own store in London to complement its others in Berlin, Singapore, Melbourne, Sydney and, er, Tokyo. The 1,700 square foot space in the City's Tabernacle Street will feature a full range of bikes as well as accessories and 'Japanese lifestyle products'.

Down in the basement, a team of mechanics will be on hand to keep London's Tokyobikes running smoothly (the servicing charges are a car-like £30 per hour) and will offer regular maintenance classes to teach clueless office types who have never handled a spanner how to mend a puncture and adjust their derailleurs.

The shop is also organising a series of tours during Clerkenwell Design Week in May, at which potential buyers can try a Tokyobike before splashing out the required £400 to £1,000, depending on model and specification. The firm also offers a tax-free purchase scheme for those buying a Tokyobike to ride to work.

Photos: Tokyobike

Gallery

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