



BIANCHI ZURIGO DISC

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

→ “THIS IS A COOL-LOOKING one!” exclaimed the grinning mechanic as I picked up a Bianchi Zurigo Disc for an *Adventure Cyclist* test ride.

He wasn't kidding. The guys at Old Town Bike Shop in Colorado Springs have built up a lot of bikes for me over the years, most of them fairly utilitarian, loaded touring machines, the pickup trucks of the cycling world.

Many have had a certain *je ne sais quoi*, and a few have been downright handsome. But “cool?” That's not a word that leaps to mind when you're evaluating the dubious charms of an Ford F-150. You can trust me on this — I've owned one, and I know.

The Bianchi Zurigo Disc, on the other hand? Oh, yeah. It's totally cool.

The \$1,799 Zurigo Disc is a real eye-grabber with its glossy black finish, retro white badging, and hints here and there of celeste, Bianchi's signature color. Fitted out with a matching black 10-speed SRAM Apex group, some house-brand Reparto Corse bits, and Avid BB5 mechanical disc brakes, it doesn't look anything like your typical stodgy touring bike.

And that's because it's not. The Zurigo Disc is, at its heart, a cyclocross bike, named in honor of the 1967 world championships in Zurich, the fifth and final worlds won by Italian Renato Longo. But it's also a versatile two-wheeler that can tackle everything from all-seasons commuting to

SPECIFICATIONS BIANCHI ZURIGO DISC

Price: \$1,799
Sizes available: 49cm, 52cm, 55cm, 58cm, 61cm
Sizes tested: 55cm
Weight: 23.3 lbs. (55cm, with Shimano XT M770 pedals)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

1. **Seat tube:** 55cm (center to top)
2. **Top tube:** 55cm
3. **Head tube angle:** 72°
4. **Seat tube angle:** 74°
5. **Chainstays:** 430mm
6. **Bottom bracket drop:** 65mm
7. **Crank spindle height above ground:** 295mm
8. **Fork offset:** 48mm
9. **Wheelbase:** 1020mm
10. **Standover height:** 810mm
11. **Frame:** 7000 series aluminum, triple-buttet, hydroformed tubes; tapered head tube; top tube flattened underneath for carrying. Bosses for two water bottle cages; mounts for fender and rear rack; disc brake mounts; cable stops; internally routed rear brake cable; chain keeper; replaceable derailleur hanger
12. **Fork:** Carbon with alloy steerer (1 1/8 to 1 1/2 in.); fender mounts at fork crown and dropouts; disc mounts
13. **Rims:** Bianchi Reparto Corse by Maddux SR300, 32mm deep section, 32-hole
14. **Spokes:** straight gauge, 14g, anodized black and white



- 15. Hubs:** Formula DC91 (front), Formula CX 32 (rear), 32-hole
- 16. Tires:** Kenda Kwicker, 700x32c
- 17. Bottom bracket:** SRAM Pressfit 30
- 18. Crankset:** SRAM Apex, 172.5mm, 48/34 chainrings
- 19. Cassette:** SRAM PG-30 10-speed, 11,13,15,17,19,21,23,25,28,32
- 20. Chain:** FSA Team Issue 10-speed
- 21. Brake/shift levers:** SRAM Apex DoubleTap
- 22. Front derailleur:** SRAM Apex
- 23. Rear derailleur:** SRAM Apex
- 24. Brakes:** Avid BB5 discs, 160mm rotor (front), 140mm (rear)
- 25. Pedals:** n/a
- 26. Seat post:** Reparto Corse SP-620 alloy offset, 31.6mm by 300mm, two-bolt clamp
- 27. Stem:** Reparto Corse AS007N alloy, 100mm, 7" rise, 31.8mm, four-bolt clamp
- 28. Handlebar:** Reparto Corse JD-RA35A compact, 44cm, 31.8mm clamp area

- 29. Bar tape:** Bianchi cork
- 30. Headset:** FSA Orbit C-40-ACB
- 31. Saddle:** San Marco Era Start Power

GEARING IN INCHES

	48	34
11	117.8	83.5
13	99.7	70.6
15	86.4	61.2
17	76.2	54.0
19	68.2	48.3
21	61.7	43.7
23	56.3	39.9
25	51.8	36.7
28	46.3	32.8
32	40.5	28.7

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singletrack to lightly loaded touring with a rear rack and fenders. Indeed, the Bianchi website describes it as “the Swiss Army knife of bikes.”

“It’s not meant to be the full-out ’cross bike but definitely is the more inexpensive way to get your feet wet in the sport,” says David Reed, vice president of marketing and communications for Bianchi USA.

“We do have many dealers who sell it that way. But, yes, commuting, off-road trails, some touring — it’s a great all-around and fun-to-ride bicycle.”

He wasn’t kidding either. I first rode the Zurigo Disc as it arrived, unencumbered, then rode it a bunch more after adding a fatter and more road-worthy pair of tires. Finally, I toiled around El Paso County with a rear rack and either panniers or a rack trunk, playing credit-card tourist.

No matter where I rode it or how, I never wished for the bike to be anything other than what it was.

Which is odd, frankly.

For starters, I’m a card-carrying member of the Steel Is Real Club, and the Zurigo Disc is a 7000-series aluminum alloy frame with a carbon fork. I’m practically required by charter to sneer at it. But I won’t. The triple-butted, hydro-formed frame and fork work together beautifully to create a frisky yet forgiving ride that was nothing like the beating I recall enduring when I last rode aluminum bikes regularly, back in the previous millennium.

Too, the Zurigo has disc brakes, which I’ve resisted on my personal cyclocross bikes, though I have discs on two touring bikes. The BB5s are something of a price-point compromise with only one adjusting knob — BB7s have two — but these budget calipers work just fine with the SRAM Apex DoubleTap levers, gripping a 160mm rotor up front and a 140mm behind. And I’ll concede that there is something to be said for only having two white knuckles per fist when

you're negotiating a pebble-peppered, washed-out, downhill bit of singletrack.

When you start grinding back up, the low end of 34 x 32 (28.7 gear inches) is more than adequate for most pitches, even with a light load, because you're not starting the climb aboard 30-odd pounds of steel touring bicycle. This 55cm Zurigo Disc weighed just 23.3 pounds with a pair of Shimano XT M770 pedals, and when stripped to the bare essentials, it fairly hopped up hills.

Inline cable adjusters help solve shifting problems on the fly, and a chain keeper does exactly that, sparing you a dropped chain when you downshift at the bottom of the hill. And should you find the slope too steep to ride, even with the drivetrain properly squared away, the Zurigo's top tube is flattened underneath and parks neatly atop one shoulder for portaging purposes.

The stock tires, a knobby pair of 700 x 32c Kenda Kwickers, felt secure on loose surfaces but less so on pavement. I switched them out after just a few rides for a set of 700 x 38c Schwalbe Little

Bens, which hook up well off road and further enhance your comfort on long road rides, especially if you run them down around 40 to 45 psi.

For touring, I mounted a Tubus Logo Classic rear rack, then added a pair of Arkel Dry-Lite panniers and a Jandd handlebar bag. I hung the Arkels on the lower rail for stability and kept the load light — about 10 pounds of what I consider to be the bare essentials for a bike overnight involving a motel stay, including cap, arm and knee warmers, rain jacket, minipump, patch kit, snacks, off-the-bike clothes and sandals, iPhone, iPad, charger, and a Canon point-and-shoot with a spare battery. A saddlebag held three spare tubes, tire irons, and a mini-tool.

The extra weight was hardly noticeable. We were a couple of seconds slower rolling away from stop signs and a tad pokier up steep hills, but if anything the additional pounds seemed to further smooth out the Zurigo's ride, the way a full bed of firewood does for an F-150.

Here, this may give you an idea of

how much I enjoyed riding the Zurigo Disc. I have a garage overflowing with bikes, a few of them truly stellar bits of machinery designed and built by people I know on a first-name basis, and generally at some point during a review, I decide I'd like to ride one of them, just to cleanse the palate, as it were.

Not this time. I rode the Zurigo day in and day out, on asphalt, concrete, hard-packed dirt, and pulverized granite, for hours at a stretch and for short hops, too. When your hard-won prejudices fail you, you might as well relax and enjoy your comeuppance.

I didn't race the bike, but then it wasn't cyclocross season. Anyway, I quit racing back in 2004. That crowd won't even return my friendly waves anymore. I guess I'm just not cool. But the Bianchi Zurigo Disc is. No kidding. **AC**

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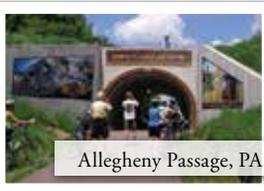
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