

Trike action

When is a pram not a pram? Martin Love tests his origami skills on the folding Taga tricycle



TAGA STROLLER CYCLE
PRICE: £1,695
SEATS: UP TO 3
EMISSIONS: ZERO
GOOD FOR: YUMMY MUMMIES
BAD FOR: SLUMMY DADDIES

Sugar, milk, light bulbs, a hedge trimmer... over the years I've borrowed many things from my neighbour, but this is the first time she's lent me a baby. "What do you want him for?" she asked anxiously. "Crash dummy for a vehicle I'm testing," I replied. "Oh, right," she answered brightly. "Keep him all afternoon if you want." The vehicle I was proposing to strap young William into is the "multi-function urban Taga", which has been specially created for transporting children in an ethical way around congested centres. It was launched earlier this month at that shrine to high-end functionality, the Design Museum in London. And the single most annoying thing about it is that it makes you pinch yourself and think "Now why didn't I think of that?" The Taga is a pushchair that doubles as a tricycle. Or, in the puff-tastic words of its brochure, it is "a new transport modality". It came into being a couple of years ago when Dr Shlomo Barak, a Dutch inventor, was left to look after his young grandchild for a few weeks. Casting around for a safe and fun way to enjoy the outdoors, he decided to knock together an old stroller and a folding bike that were kicking about his workshop. Shlomo was rather pleased with his ad-hoc design and showed it to his two sons, who loved it. They built a proper prototype, spent a year testing it and, hey presto, their stroller-cum-trike was ready for the market.

Based in Holland, Barak was used to seeing parents pedalling about with their wailing children belted into seats behind them. But



Quick-change artist: it takes just 20 seconds to transform the Taga from a stroller to a sturdy tricycle

you can't keep an eye on your little darlings if they're sitting behind you. Their feet and arms have a habit of coming free and they always look so bored – all they can see is the small of your sweating back. Inspired by a big-basketed butcher's bicycle, Barak hit on the idea of putting his precious cargo in front of him. Then he went a step further, thinking: wouldn't it be great to arrive at the school/shop/café/park and be able to unload the baby into a pushchair? His inventor's brain whirled into action...

In its stroller guise, the Taga looks like a fairly chunky three-wheel buggy. The seat is tough but comfortable, there are pockets and shelves for storing things, and it is easy to manoeuvre. Lift off the seat, though, and flip over the front wheel and the Taga is instantly transformed into a neat tricycle. "Wow," gasps two-year-old William, as if I have just pulled a rabbit from my

hat. I strap him in, climb on behind and we are off. He whoops with joy, as if he is in the front of a rollercoaster. With a traditional child's seat there's always the worry of the bike tipping over, but having three wheels, the Taga is immensely stable. There's even a parking brake, so it won't roll away while you are loading up.

But who will buy it? The hefty price tag puts it firmly at the luxury end of the market. But Barak and his sons have done all they can to give it as long a shelf life as possible. It will carry children from birth to six years of age, at which point the seat can be changed for a cargo basket. It also has an entirely modular construction, so any worn pieces can easily be swapped out. And then, of course, there is the cycling dividend. Up to 30% of all car journeys are less than two miles, a range well within the reach of the Taga. Just think of the fuel savings and health benefits. And, as William said: "It's way more fun." ★

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