



RoadBikeRider.com
reviews Co-Motion's Speedster Co-Pilot

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Photos are not from the original review

Co-Motion Speedster Tandem

By Fred Matheny



www.co-motion.com

Base price: \$5,175

Sizes: 21/18; 22/19; 23/20; 23/18 inches

Source: website, bike shops

How obtained: cold cash

RBR advertiser: no

Tested: 250 hours

HOT!

- handles like a single bike
- plenty of stoker room
- S and S Couplings for easy travel
- secure braking on long descents
- versatile

not!

- steel is heavier than titanium or carbon
- may handle too quickly for some captains
- Race Face cranks have excessive stance width

My wife and I have ridden single bikes together for over 30 years. But we had never owned a tandem. Deb liked to control her own destiny on the bike; I didn't want the responsibility. Crashing your wife can disturb the most secure of marriages.

But in August '04 we tested a tandem, rode a century on it, and were hooked. The twofer let us share long rides together at a comfortable level of effort for both. On single bikes, an easy spin for me was a fairly hard effort for Deb. On the tandem, we both get the sort of workout we want and go faster than we can together while riding our "half bikes."

When it came time to buy our own tandem we wanted a bike we could use for travel. Another must: sprightly handling but stability on our long, fast Colorado descents. And finally we wanted a bike that fit our 5-inch height differential.

Our search led us 250 miles across the state to the biggest tandem bike shop in the world, Tandem Cycle Works of Colorado in Denver. Owners Lynn Dexter and Patrick Gibbons were extremely helpful. They listened carefully to our wish list and suggested the Co-Motion Speedster Co-Pilot with S and S Couplings. They supplied a demo tandem that we rode all around Denver for an afternoon. They even delivered our new tandem to the other side of the state a few weeks later on their way to Moab, Utah, to ride.

Multi Talented

The Speedster is a do-everything bike. Although not as light as a carbon or titanium tandem would be, its steel frame isn't a burden on long climbs and it offers the stability to mount racks and panniers for an extended tour. We opted for some bells and whistles: a WoundUp carbon tandem fork, Old Man Mountain rear rack, Shimano Flight Deck, RockShox suspension seatpost for the stoker and an Avid mechanical disk rear brake.

The latter was crucial because we would be riding the bike in Colorado's mountains. The disk brake means that the rim can't overheat, possibly causing a blowout and a crash. On the front is a Shimano V-brake. By feathering it on the downhills, I can keep the rim cool enough. Braking is certain and easily controllable.

I was tempted not to get the Flight Deck computer. Who needs another instruction manual to absorb? But the Flight Deck displays the current gear combination, crucial on a tandem when the driver can't glance back to see where the chain is on the cassette. Another solution is bar-end shifters. You can tell the approximate gear you're in by looking at the position of the levers.

Deb loves the bike's ride characteristics. Stokers tend to get beaten up by tandems because they can't see upcoming bumps. But the RockShox suspension seatpost takes the edge off even rough western Colorado pavement. And the Speedster's ride is plush due to careful tubing choice. (Although RockShox has discontinued making its road post, Co-Motion can provide a Thudbuster that is said to be just as effective.)

We chose the Ferrari red paint from a full pallet of colors. When I started racing it was a truism that red bikes are faster. Science has yet to disprove this bit of biker wisdom, but the color makes Speedster look like it deserves its name.

Another nice touch: a pump peg so I could mount a full-size Zefal HPX frame pump. Not that flats were likely with Continental Gatorskin 700x28C tires. In a year of riding, we've had two flats, one from a small piece of wire, the other from a shard of glass.

The only component I dislike is the Race Face crankset. The stance width is excessive. I feel like I'm pedaling splay-legged. "Birthing cranks," for sure.

[\[Co-Motion webmaster's note: The rugged and reliable Race Face crankset Fred refers to was discontinued in 2005. New Speedsters have the much more svelte and narrower FSA Gossamer ME crankset. Now back to Fred's review...\]](#)

Light and Lively

Handling is light and lively. We were cautioned that some riders don't like the single-bike quickness of the Co-Motion geometry but to me it felt completely normal and I didn't have to change my usual bike-handling reflexes.

We got the 23x20-inch size "large" frame. It's perfect for my 5-foot-10, long-legged body and Deb's 5-5, 115 pounds. She has plenty of room to stretch out. The captain's stem can be flipped over to raise the handlebar for even better control.

Gearing is ideal for Colorado's long climbs. The Ultegra 54/44/30-tooth triple chainrings are mated to an 11-34 9-speed cassette. The 54x11 high gear lets us pedal at 40 mph while the 30x34 low gets us up the steepest inclines the Rockies offer.

We plan some tours so we opted for a rear rack. I mounted a rack trunk for incidentals on day trips. We also got two S and S travel cases for airline trips. At \$375 each they're pricey but the security is important to protect our investment from rabid airport baggage handlers. And by carrying the tandem this way, we'll avoid the high fees charged by most airlines for bikes checked as baggage. I used one of the cases to transport my Ritchey Breakaway single bike safely.

We haven't taken the tandem apart yet by unscrewing the S and S Couplings, but Co-Motion supplies an explanatory pamphlet and instructional CD along with the required wrench. Also, Tandem Cycle Works of Colorado offers classes at the shop. The bike comes with cable splitters to make the job easier. We don't anticipate any problems.

After 12 months of riding the Speedster, we're wondering why we waited so long to get a tandem.

(end review)

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