

# Best recumbent bikes made at Easy Racers

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FOR THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

When Dr. Paul Robbins of San Benicio got to the age where hunching over the handlebars of a standard bike was just too painful on long rides, he decided to get a recumbent bicycle. He'd heard of Easy Racers, "World's fastest bicycles," so he came to Watsonville to check them out. They built a bike especially for his needs, and now he's enjoying riding again.

Easy Racers occupies a large building at 200 Airport Road, and the first thing to catch the eye of the visitor is lines of bike frames, like sides of beef, hanging from the ceiling. One of the bike builders, Jose Benicio, showed me around the facility. Besides the frames, there are bikes in various stages of construction, along with a few finished machines.

Recumbent bikes are more comfortable because the rider sits down on a seat with a back rest, with legs stretched out in front. There is no stress on the shoulders or upper back.

Measurements are taken, and each bike is custom designed for each rider, starting with nine frame sizes. These serious bikes for serious riders are constructed from steel, aluminum or titanium, and they range in price from about \$2,000 to almost \$6,000.

Benicio showed me their newest model, the Javelin, which has a single large tube

for a frame, rather than an array of smaller tubes. He also pointed out the two kinds of seats, the Cobra racing seat, which is a padded seat with a high backrest, and the Cool Back touring, a net-like mesh backrest that looks as comfortable as a beach chair.

They also build tandem models, and even a bicycle built for three.

Easy Racers was started by the late Gardner Martin in a converted chicken coup on Freedom Boulevard in 1978. Current owners, Fred and Denton, still use Martin's original design, one that has won races all over the country. In fact, Fred used one of their bikes to break the elusive 65 mph barrier. Both men won medals at a race in The Dalles, Oregon on May 11.

Through a network of dealers and direct sales, Easy Racers find homes all over the country and abroad. The only large scale recumbent maker that builds their bikes completely in the United States, their bikes have earned a reputation as solid as their almost indestructible frames.

There are many customers in their 60s, 70s and 80s who ride these bikes cross country.

For those considering switching to a recumbent bike, but are not sure if they'd be comfortable with it, Easy Racer has demos available. I took a demonstration ride and fell in love with the bike.



Meade Fischer/Register-Pajaronian