

Brief history of Velomobiles

A velomobile is a three- or four-wheeled bicycle with some form of bodywork. The main function of the bodywork is either to provide protection from the elements or to reduce air resistance and allow you to cycle faster.

Early velomobiles

1920s–40s

Covered pedal vehicles were already being experimented with in Europe during the interwar period. And they became particularly popular during the fuel rationing of World War II, but disappeared when cheap mopeds and small cars became popular.



Mochet-Velocar-1930, Frankrike

The Velomobile takes shape

1970s–80s

The oil crisis sparked new interest in alternative vehicles. In the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, enthusiasts began building streamlined recumbent bicycles with bodies – the first modern velomobiles. Well-known brands such as Leitra (Denmark) and Cab-Bike (Germany) established themselves during this time.

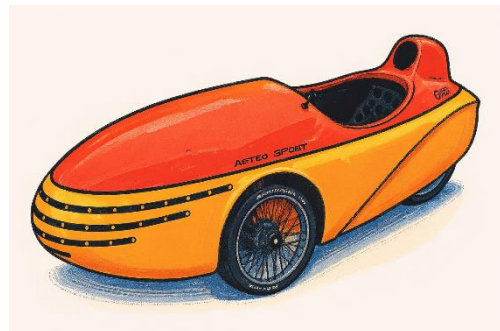


Leitra 1980, Danmark

Fast Velomobiles

1990s–2000s

Velomobiles such as Quest, Mango and Strada were built in small series, mainly in the Netherlands and Germany. They were aimed mostly at enthusiasts who cycled far and fast, often without a motor. They were aerodynamic and efficient, but expensive and rather impractical for everyday use.



Sinner Mango2002, Nederländerna

Practical velomobiles

2010s

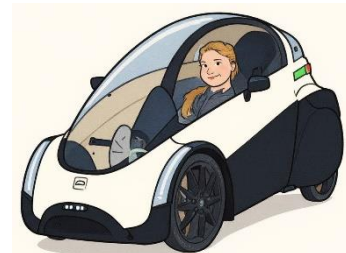
When electric bicycle motors became common, new possibilities opened up. Suddenly, larger, more comfortable and more practical bicycle cars could be used even in urban traffic. Interest grew rapidly, with projects such as ELF (USA), PodRide (Sweden) and Podbike (Norway) receiving great international attention.



Organic transit, ELF 2015, USA



Updigitty, PodRide 2016, Sverige



Podbike, Frikar 2018, Norge

From niche to market?

2020s

Several manufacturers in Europe and North America have started producing practical cycle cars in small series. Quadvelo (Belgium) and Veemo (Canada) are examples of models with electric assistance and weather protection, aimed at commuters. At the same time, cargo cycle cars such as CityQ (Norway) are used for package deliveries in large cities.



Quadvelo 2023, Belgium



Envo, Veemo 2023, Canada



CityQ Cargo 2025, Norge

Current situation 2026

Over the last ten to fifteen years, a lot of nice velomobiles have appeared, but unfortunately most of them are not available for purchase. They are stuck at the prototype or small test series stage. Some can be specially ordered directly from the manufacturer, but none are available for purchase in stores yet. Most people do not know what a velomobile is or think it is a toy or a vehicle for the disabled. The transition towards a more sustainable society and the increasing interest in cycling as a means of transport speak strongly for an increased interest in velomobiles in the future.