

## **Equipment Review: Victoria Spinning Wheel by Louet**

First, a bit about me. As of 2006 I'd been a spinner for nearly five years. This is my fifth wheel. My first wheel was a Schacht single treadle and it is by that wheel that I judge all others. I also own a Bosworth Journey Wheel, a Wyatt Pegasus, and a Bosworth Notebook Charkha in addition to a whole bunch of spindles. Back in the old days when I was a working woman, I worked in Software Quality Control. What that means is that I like criticizing and I don't hold back too much.

The Victoria is Louet's brand new addition to their line of spinning wheels. It is a folding portable wheel. The box arrived at my LYS, Woolbearers, from the US distributor. The box that contained my wheel measured 23" x 6" x 15". I'm providing that information because some wanted to know if the wheel could be considered carry-on baggage.

The wheel comes with 3 bobbins, a "lazy kate", and a carry bag. I weighed the wheel on my bathroom scale. The wheel with the flyer assembly in place weighed 7.0 pounds plus or minus 1/2 pound. The wheel in the bag weighs 12.5 pounds plus or minus 1/2 pound. The bag has straps so that you can carry the wheel like a backpack. I should mention that I got the wheel in beech. It also comes in oak which is beautiful but heavier.

In order to assemble the wheel, you have to flip the Mother of All up and then attach the footman to the wheel. This is done by means of a plastic connector. It was initially difficult to get on and takes effort. Placing the cup at an angle, as suggested by the instructions, helps. The flyer is attached by slipping the end of the flyer into hollow metal tube. There is a slot in the end of the flyer that has to line up and the flyer is connected by a magnet within the tube. The drive band has to be put into one of the three slots on the flyer whorl (attached to the Mother of All.). The last thing to do to get the wheel going is to run the Scotch tension cord over the bobbin and tighten it. The knob that controls this comes out of its hole, but I think that is OK.

So first I tried treadling. That took a little bit getting used to. The treadles are small and don't move up and down too far. But it is very, very easy to treadle even with just my right foot.

Now down to the real business. I tied on a leader and put it through one of the little loops on the flyer. Each side of the flyer has a wire and plastic loop (yarn guide) that can be moved front and back so that the yarn winds on evenly. Then the yarn goes through a hook at the near end of the flyer and through the orifice. There is no hook with the wheel. Because the orifice hole is long, it's a little difficult to get the yarn through. I may have to get a hook. The exit of the orifice (or entrance where the new yarn goes in) looks pretty small. It's deceptive though. It's about a half inch and every so slightly larger than my Schacht.

So how does the wheel spin? Nice, real nice. Smooth. The Scotch tension is easy to adjust. There are three ratios: 1:6, 1:9, and 1:13. They work well enough for me. And it appears at first glance that the bobbins are almost the same size as the Schacht bobbins. Not as big as the standard Louet but certainly not small.

In 2006 the wheel retailed for \$550 and came with a travel bag.

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