



E-bikes are seriously cool these days, and it's hard to find one cooler than the Stajvelo RV01, a futuristic two-wheeler almost entirely made in Monaco from advanced composites.

Stajvelo founder Thierry Manni is the uncle of F1 superstar-in-the-making Charles Leclerc, and the prototype we tested was on loan from the young racer, who's been photographed riding it around the pits at various grand prix circuits.

The Stajvelo (stajvelo.com/en/) won't reach F1 speeds, however. Under European (and Australian) law its electric motor develops just 250 watts, and cuts out pedal assistance at speeds beyond 25km/h. That's fast enough to keep up with city traffic, particularly in Monaco, where *Robb Report Australia & NZ* joined Manni for a ride on the principality's busy streets, including sections of the Grand Prix circuit.

There are three levels of assistance and the motor develops up to 70Nm torque, making light work of even steep hills. The transmission operates like a sports car's double-clutch gearbox: the rider can select manual mode when pushing hard, or auto when taking it easy. City blocks fly past quickly – as do the McLarens and Bentleys

stuck in the traffic. Parking? No problems; there's even a geolocation system that allows you to find your bike with your phone.

Manni says the design brief was to move away from mountain bike styling, for something a businessperson in a suit would look good riding.

Manni is from the Monégasque family that founded Mecaplast, one of Europe's

largest suppliers of high-tech plastics. The E-Bike's frame material is so rigid the top bar can be easily removed to make it a step-through design.

The injection-moulded wheels are identical, but reversed front-to-rear. The spokes are gently bowed, positioning the disc brakes in the centreline, improving stability.

Comfort is excellent due to balloon tyres and built-in Baramind shock absorbers in the handlebars. There is enough adjustment for riders from 1.6 metres to two metres tall. Manni says a person of average weight can ride for about 150 kilometres "on the flat" before running out of boost. Even in hilly Monaco, when using full power, the battery is good for 70 kilometres.

With the motor multiplying the pedal effort, the Stajvelo feels almost weightless, though in reality its impressive range is helped along by a very large battery that contributes to an all-up weight of 27 kilograms.

The starting price is €7000 (\$11,000), but the Stajvelo can be customised with a range of features, and painted in any colour the buyer desires.

There are 800 bike brands worldwide, we need to be different," says Manni. He cites 100 pre-orders already, with plans to deliver 250 units in 2018 and 2500 next year. Manni is hugely proud of the Stajvelo, and of an innovative production system that allows it to be produced in a tiny factory in the heart of the principality.

"I'm not here because of fiscal reasons," Manni says of a place that is famous for enticing rich people with its zero income tax. "I'm here because I'm born here and my life is here. I'm building the Stajvelo because it's a great demonstration of what we can do in Monaco."

Having ridden it, it's hard to disagree.

– TONY DAVIS

