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The All-Season, All-Terrain Mountain Bike

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Credit: Courtesy Felt Bicycles

LEBOWSKe 10

When Felt Bicycles sat down at the drawing board to sketch out new bike concepts, it came up with this electric assist fat bike, the LEBOWSKe.

The LEBOWSKe is a two-wheeled SUV, and the ultimate bike for commuters, adventurers, and even hunters. And it's insanely fun. Like all fatties, with the tires at a ridiculously low PSI, like 4 psi to 6 psi, it has superb traction on unconventional terrain like snowy fields and sandy beaches. On broken pavement and rutted dirt roads, fat tires absorb shock nearly as well as suspension. And, thanks to the pedal assist battery and motor, when you're hauling gear or groceries, or faced with a massive climb, you can get a boost.

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"We wanted to create a fat bike that's a lot of fun, but less effort," says Zach Krapfl, Felt USA E-Bike category manager. "So we added a Bosch motor to make pedaling a loaded LEBOWSKe about the same effort as pedaling a standard MTB."

Hop on the aluminum LEBOWSKe, and it feels like any other fat bike, though a tad on the heavy side. The handlebar-mounted cycling computer shows standard stats, like how far you've gone, max speed, and time of day. But it also controls the Bosch system, and tells you about how many miles of battery-powered assistance you have left before you need to recharge. Use the computer's buttons to toggle through modes — Eco, Tour, Sport, and Turbo. All modes have the same top speed. A governor caps the bike's assisted speed at 20 mph, but some modes assist more than others. Eco adds 50 percent to the effort you're putting into pedaling, and Turbo even more. Once you've selected your assist mode, start pedaling. When you reach a cadence of just 16 RPM, the motor will kick in to help you on your way.

In our tests on rough roads, city streets, and open stretches of multi-use trail, the LEBOWSKe was thrillingly fast, especially for a bicycle. It brought speed, power, and ease to every ride. And because of its fat tires, it can go anywhere. After every excursion, riders returned with face-splitting grins.

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"The LEBOWSKe has had an extremely positive response from commuters in Seattle, San Francisco, and New York," Krapfl says. It's not just because the bike smooths out city streets and can help you haul dinner home, it's also because the bike is exceptionally stable and gives riders confidence. It took a couple of rides to get comfortable with the LEBOWSKe's acceleration — in Turbo mode, once you start spinning, it takes off. Starting in Eco and upshifting was significantly smoother. Once we got used to the mechanics, we rigged up a trailer to haul groceries up San Francisco—steep hills were psyched with how easy it was. We got exercise and fresh air, we ran errands, and we had a great time.

The battery recharges in 4.5 hours. But it also lasts a long time — about 50 miles on Eco, and typically 15-20 miles on Turbo. We topped it off regularly to make sure we never ran out of juice and had to pedal the 48-pound bike without a power assist.

The LEBOWSKe uses the best available mountain bike components, including a SRAM X01 11-speed drivetrain and Guide RSC hydraulic brakes. And it comes with a Rockshox Reverb Stealth dropper seatpost, so you can get low when you're rolling down those steep or technical hills. [\$5,800; feltbicycles.com]

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— Berne Broudy

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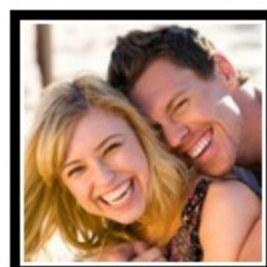
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