

FIRST RIDE: DUCATI TK-01 RR

We've been out on the trails putting Ducati's top-of-the-line e-bike to the test.

Words: Charlie Oakman **Photography:** Charlie Oakman and Ducati

As Ducati's CEO Claudio Domenicali introduced the world to a new relationship with Italian mountain bike manufacturer THOK launching the new MIG-RR E-Bike, the lines drawn between the motorcycle and cycling world was arguably blurred more than ever before. Ducati was in the E-Bike business and though this a huge step away from what we considered the Ducati 'norm', so was the Multi-Strada and Scrambler at the time.

Being as ferociously protective over the brand as Ducati rightfully is, it is no surprise that it partnered with a further Italian legend in Stefano Migliorini (The 'MIG' in the Ducati MIG-RR and MIG-S), a multiple world title winner in BMX and Downhill MTB disciplines, now the CEO of the THOK cycling brand.

This is by no means a vanity project for Ducati. The new TK-01 RR is a serious bike with top-of-the-range components from both the cycling and motorcycling world – Shimano, Ohlins, Renthal, Pirelli and Crank Brothers to name but a few. These all combine to produce a truly jaw-dropping E-MTB complete with Ducati Corse branding on the brushed aluminium, black and

red frame which was greeted by numerous envious eyes over the period I had it on test.

Though a regular MTB rider, this was my first run out on any E-Bike, thus I should warn the MoreBikes reader that my enthusiasm for this bike is inextricably tied in with the utter joy of the entire experience.

As I regularly ride with E-Bikers I know the struggle to stick with them on the inclines, thus pulling the TK-01 RR out of the back of my van was a real game-changer.

With a price tag of some £7,300, the Ducati is a pretty extreme first ride and I want to address this cost straight away – yes it is a large outlay, but you have to consider what you are getting for this bike that sits at the top of Ducati's range. To start with the suspension. All-new Ohlins RXF 38s on the front combining with the TTX Rear are punching out some serious components that an aftermarket cost would set you back in the region of £2,500.

Driving this muscular suspension is the latest Shimano EP8 Motor, the lightest and most compact they do which produces an extraordinary 85N/m of Torque with some 400% servo assistance. You are getting a

hugely capable level of drive from this 630w/ph motor offering a phenomenal amount of assistance as and when you want it from one of the top players in the market.

The battery is located in-frame with a subtle charging point. Aesthetically, this is a big win for the TK-01 RR, though batteries do have a shelf-life like all electric storage devices depending on how you look after them. Replacing in-frame batteries are fiddly as you need to drop out the motor to get to them, but this is a small price to pay when you consider just how good this E-Bike looks and performs.

Jumping on to the TK-01 RR for the first time was made far easier by lowering the KS Dropper post, another name synonymous with quality components. The post is activated under the handlebar with your left thumb, a far easier place to drop or extend the seat position than those placed above the bar. Next to the dropper is your menu button; this feeds the screen that is placed at the right-hand side of the stem which gives you all of the information that you are going to need – battery power in bars, mode, mph, total mileage time, etc.



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TECH SPEC



DUCATI TK-01 RR

PRICE: £7290
FRAME: THOK 6061 T4 T6 Aluminium, Forged and CNC machined, headtube tapered 1.8, 29"/27.5" geometry, integrated down tube battery, enclosed internal cable, fully sealed cartridge bearing, 170mm travel
ENGINE: SHIMANO - EP8 (250W - 85Nm)
BATTERY: SHIMANO 630Wh with on/off Easy Touch
SUSPENSION: (F) Öhlins - RXF38 Air TTX18, Boost - 29", 15 x 110 mm, Offset 44, 38mm chassis, 180mm of travel, compression and rebound adjust (R) Öhlins - TTX Air, metric 230 x 65mm - custom tuned Ducati (TPS THOK Progressive System)
BRAKES: SHIMANO Deore XT 4 pistons caliper with Ice Technologies rotor (increased performance) 203mm diameter front and rear. Mineral oil
WHEELS: (F) CRANKBROTHERS Synthesis - Alloy 29" x 31mm (R) CRANKBROTHERS - Synthesis - Alloy 27.5" x 35mm
TYRES: (F) PIRELLI Scorpion E-MTB S, TR, SmartGrip, HyperWall 29" x 2.6 (R) PIRELLI Scorpion E-MTB S, TR, SmartGrip, HyperWall, 27.5" x 2.6
HANDLEBAR: RENTHAL Carbon 35mm, rise 20mm, 800mm width
CONTACT: www.ducati.com

The controls are simple to navigate and having turned on the bike with an under-frame button you can scroll through the four main modes that range from Off, Eco, Trail and Boost, each allowing more assistance on the ride from the motor. The modes can be refined via an app that Bluetooths to the bike – not something I played with if I am honest – though this does allow you to adapt the modes to how easy or hard you want your ride to be.

Weight can be an issue, but savings are made where possible with a Renthal Carbon Fat Bar mounted with further Shimano bling, Deore XT gears that run the 12-speed derailleur, and the brakes of the same name powering the four-piston caliper brake system. The carbon bar is one weight saving, as are the 203mm brake discs, combining alloy into the steel rim which benefit from the ice cooling system – basically wings that direct air on to the disc to keep them cool under heavy and demanding braking.

My first outing on the Ducati was probably the most challenging with a visit to Cannock Chase, a regular haunt of mine consisting of a 12-mile loop with over 1,500ft of elevation (according to my Strava) with climbs, downhill rushes and lengthy open trails.

As I set off I did so without power which was a very normal experience, albeit likened to riding a more budget 'normal' Mountain Bike due to the additional weight. Here the analogy ends though as the benefit of the full suspension gives you an extremely forgiving ride with the 170mm of travel at the rear and 180mm at the front capable of taking some hefty hits

whilst being refined enough to give endless feedback.

The drive comes from the 27.5-inch rear wheel, be that from your own inertia or with assistance benefitting from the deep tread of OE Pirelli Scorpion tyres giving plenty of push at the rear, balanced out with sublime control and feel at the front which boasts a larger 29"-er front wheel (this is known as a Mullet set up) – agile and capable to roll-over some pretty substantial obstacles.

Adding the power you feel a slight assistance in Eco taking the edge off of your effort. Step this up in Trail and you have more useable power that varies levels of help in and out as the terrain demands it and allows you to maintain a healthy constant speed without draining all of your energy reserves.

As for Boost – well, this is something else and you have to be a little more wary with this function as it can catch you out, especially in gnarly turns and technical sections where it can kick in on slow peddling, urging you to get up to speed swiftly. By far the most fun setting and one that will drain your battery quickest, but heading up the steepest climbs, Boost makes such challenges a breeze – importantly leaving you energised at the top of a downhill section and ready to tackle the race to the bottom.

This was the most rewarding element of the Ducati TK-01 RR experience, the ability to do more and feel better while doing it.

The number of times I have climbed trails at Cannock in preparation for an exhilarating downhill section, only to be too exhausted to enjoy



the buzz of tackling the drop, is extremely frustrating.

Heading downhill you down-toggle the mode to Off, thus maximising your speed riding 'normally' as any assisted E-Bike speed is regulated to a maximum of 17 miles an hour – in downhill free-flow you get the full benefit of everything the TK-01 RR can do.

Cannock was a good test of battery life, flitting through the modes across multiple scenarios over a 12-mile loop which only dropped the battery power by a quarter. Once home, a more subdued and leisurely 25-mile round trip along the Kennet and Avon canal with my son exclusively in ECO mode didn't even register a drop on the battery life indicator, so there is longevity in a full charge for sure.

A final run-out with the Ducati was at a small trail maintained fully by volunteers on the outskirts of Swindon. Croft is a 2.6-mile trail that loops round a densely wooded area along the M4 with around 85ft of elevation.

I wanted to see what the difference in time each mode would make to a full loop, starting without any power, which registered a time of 22 minutes and I was properly blowing!

In Eco the time fell dramatically to 18:30, Trail better still at 17:15, with a final run in Boost being the fastest I could muster at 16:38. This included the time it took me to get back up having been caught out and launching the Ducati into a tree.

Interestingly though my Strava App also monitors my heart rate via my wrist-mounted Garmin; the variation



between each ride and average heart rate was a mere four beats per minute. With evidence that my work rate was similar throughout really challenges the misconception that an E-Bike is cheating in some way – you can just go further for longer and enjoy the ride even more. I am definitely a convert.

As riding experiences go it was a real privilege to ride Ducati's TK-01 RR; it is one of the most enjoyable two-wheeled experiences I have had and certainly changed my thinking about electrically-assisted bikes.

The price tag may seem hefty to a motorcycle enthusiast, which is understandable, but given the quality components, the build, the style, the ride and the history behind the design of this E-Bike, if I had it, I would pay it.

