

Darrvin e-bikes arrive in Lakeview

By KEVIN WINTER
Lake County Examiner

Darrvin, a Cape Town, South Africa-based company, now has its first e-bike at Tall Town Bike & Camp in Lakeview. After a delay of a couple of years due to COVID and supply chain issues, the owners of both companies are excited that Darrvin's high quality e-bikes will be available in Lakeview.

Darrvin founder Gustav Erlank has been in Lakeview over the past couple of weeks with the first bike model he brought from South Africa. Other models will come to Tall Town Bike & Camp later this summer. Tall Town Bike & Camp will serve as the headquarters of the United States operations for Darrvin. Thom Batty, who co-owns Tall Town Bike & Camp with Shelley Batty, will distribute bikes to other bike shops and help with servicing across the United States.

Erlank started Darrvin with the goal of designing high quality e-bikes without the premium price tag.

"I rode an e-bike across the United States in 2016 and loved them but not their price tag," said Erlank. "I knew engineer Gert Stander, who wanted to design his own e-bike, and began the development process in 2018."

For a number of years Erlank operated Bike & Saddle, an active travel company in Cape Town, South Africa. This experience gave him knowledge of the inner workings of the bicycle industry before he founded Darrvin.

In 2019, when Erlank was hiking the Oregon Desert Trail, he met Thom. Erlank said after discussing e-bikes, he decided Thom and Tall Town Bike & Camp would be the perfect place for Darrvin to expand into the United States. Thom spent some time getting to know the company and the bikes on a trip to Darrvin's



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Gustav Erlank, founder of Darrvin, shows off the first e-bike to arrive at Tall Town Bike & Camp. Additional bikes will begin arriving during the summer of 2022.

headquarters in South Africa in late 2019.

Not long after reaching an agreement, COVID and supply chain issues impacted the ability to acquire supplies and parts, and put a wrench in the shipment of the finished product to Tall Town Bike & Camp. That changed recently, allowing the partnership and process to bring Darrvin to Lakeview to pick up steam.

"In South Africa we design, build and do the procurement all in-house," said Erlank. "This allows us to maintain quality throughout the entire process."

The primary market in South Africa is largely young men for leisure and sports bike riding, according to Erlank, though an uptick in the number of commuter and street bikes occurred during the South Africa COVID lockdowns as more people began using a bike to get around their communities.

"Our goal was to have a number of different models of e-bikes available from the entry level to the higher end, all at affordable prices and a high

quality product," said Erlank.

On his recent visit, Erlank brought over the company's flagship model — the high-end Darrvin Rove — which will retail at approximately \$5,000. Other mountain and street models are currently en route to Tall Town Bike & Camp and should arrive this summer. More affordable models will retail between \$2,000 and \$3,000. People can check out the Darrvin Rove at the shop and other models when they arrive.

Erlank said riding an e-bike is about the experience compared to traditional bicycles. He said e-bikes have what is called pedal assist ranging between 1 – 10, with one being the least assistance and 10 being the most assistance. Erlank said the e-bikes provide assistance both when people are peddling on flat ground and when going up hill.

"Riding e-bikes provides a number of health benefits and helps build core and leg strength without the need of riding a traditional bicycle," said Erlank.

The battery on the Darrvin bikes lasts about 4 – 6 hours per charge, depending on conditions. Erlank said the batteries should last a minimum of ten years, and at peak performance for at least 5 years, before losing as little as 10% efficiency. The batteries can be plugged into wall outlets; this allows people going on adventures with the e-bikes to plug in at various locations. To keep batteries as fresh as possible, customers can opt in to the lifetime battery program, allowing them to swap out batteries for whatever reason up to twice a year, along with services, all for a subscription fee of \$120 per year.

"More stock will be arriving toward the end of June and will feature our mountain and commuter bikes," said Erlank. "We can compete on quality at a lower price point compared to other e-bike brands."

He said he is not daunted by breaking into the US market, but noted there is a gap in e-bike brands and services that Darrvin can fill. Erlank said that if customers need support, he and Thom will be available.

An important aspect to the Lakeview partnership is that Darrvin has chosen the town for its US HQ and together with Tall Town Bike & Camp aims to develop deep roots in the community. One project will be to open the first dedicated electric bicycle park taking advantage of the tremendous open areas around Lakeview and promoting the park and the town as a destination for bicycling tourists, all while showcasing Darrvin's range of bicycles and accessories.

"I am happy to finally have the bikes here," said Thom. "I was impressed by the components and quality when I visited them in South Africa. Demonstration rides will be available."

Tall Town Bike & Camp is located at 19 N. E St. and can be reached at 503-314-6095.

For more information visit www.darrvin-usa.com.