

## Dongfeng M-Hero 1: Large silent dragon

Von Dirk Kunde

Car buyers are waiting for affordable entry-level cars with electric drive systems - also from China. But Dongfeng is sending the complete opposite to Europe with the M-Hero 1. In German, this car would be called a monster. But since it comes from China, dragon might be a better word: a 1000 hp off-road vehicle with four e-motors that goes over hill and dale silently and emission-free.

In Switzerland, the Chinese brand is now launching sales of the 3.4-tonne and over five-metre-long e-offroader with a military look, which is also available with bulletproof armor in its home country. It was developed by the Mengshi Automobile Technology Company in Wuhan, a Dongfeng subsidiary. The word Mengshi can be translated as warrior. The company does not want to appear quite so martial in Europe. Hence the short form M-Hero.

But some enthusiasm for weapons has remained. Inside, the door handle and part of the cladding are shaped like a pistol. The vehicle is designed for hunters, foresters and farmers who often travel off the beaten track. The ground clearance is between 23 and 33.5 cm. Water depths of up to 90 cm are no problem for the electric car. All-wheel drive is meant literally here: each wheel is driven by an electric motor. Two motors work on each of the two axles. They can be operated separately or coupled, depending on the nature of the surface. There are special driving modes for mud, gravel, sand, water and snow. In total, the four motors deliver 800 kW (1,088 hp) and a torque of 1,400 Newton meters.

The M-Hero 1 will probably not only be found on dirt tracks, but also in city centers. However, with a length of 5.10 m and a width of 2.08 m, finding a parking space will be a challenge without the exterior mirrors. The weight of 3.4 tons also becomes a problem when parking on the sidewalk and in some multi-storey parking lots. The car is 1.94 m high, so you need fold-out running boards to get in. However, the M-Hero 1 is surprisingly agile for its size. This is due to the rear-wheel steering. The wheels turn up to 10.6 degrees. The turning circle is 10.2 meters. In crab mode, the electric car moves forwards sideways.

On tarmac roads, the M-Hero 1 accelerates from a standstill to 100 km/h in 4.2 seconds. The motors are limited at 180 km/h. With the 142.7 kWh battery, it should be able to travel up to 450 km (WLTP). Unfortunately, the Chinese fall short when it comes to charging. The car charges with 11 kW alternating current at the wallbox. With direct current at the fast charger, the maximum output is 100 kW. As a rule, manufacturers go up to twice the battery capacity. In this case, that would be 284 kW. A charging process therefore takes 47 minutes. However, the manufacturer's specification refers to a quick charge from 30 to 80 percent state of charge. Normally, manufacturers specify the minutes for a charge from 10 to 80 percent.

The maximum payload of the M-Hero 1 is around 500 kg. That's not much for a five-seater. The trunk has a capacity of 452 liters and 1137 liters when the rear seat is folded down electrically. Loading heavy objects is not easy, as the loading sill is extremely high. A button in the trunk allows the rear to be lowered a few centimetres thanks to the air suspension.

There is a lockable box on the outside of the side-opening rear door, which offers a further 20 liters of storage space. Up to 150 kg can be transported on the roof with carriers. With the optional trailer coupling, the off-roader can tow up to 2500 kg. However, this is likely to melt the range like green tea ice cream in the sun.

The large battery in the floor also provides energy. If you want to operate an electrical device in the countryside, far away from any sockets, you can use the 220 volt connection in the trunk. However, in the test vehicle this still corresponded to the Chinese standard. This should be rectified by the time the vehicle is delivered.

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The interior is in stark contrast to the angular lines and military look of the body. Leather with elaborate decorative stitching, wood and satin-finished steel dominate here. A high-performance filter, ionizer and fragrance dispenser ensure pleasant air in the interior. With a wheelbase of 2.95 meters, rear seat passengers enjoy plenty of legroom. The seats are heated or ventilated. A massage is available on request. In the rear, two solid and stable tables can be folded out from the back of the front seats, which would make any train driver green with envy.

In general, the interior feels more like a private jet. This impression is also reinforced by the two gear selectors in the center console. They are reminiscent of the accelerator levers in an airplane. The one on the left is actually for selecting forward or reverse gear. The one on the right is used to select the driving mode.

In addition to a head-up display, the driver can view his information on a 12.3-inch LCD screen. The front passenger also has their own screen of the same size. The central vehicle settings, navigation and infotainment are selected on the touch-sensitive display (15.6 inches) in the middle. The rear-view mirror is also a monitor. Here you can see the image from a camera on the roof. At just under two meters high, it should remain clean even when driving through Match. Various cameras and image calculations provide images of the sides, wheels and underbody on the center screen. This is helpful when driving off-road on gradients of up to 45 degrees, as you can then only see the sky through the windshield. The right music for the drive comes from 16 loudspeakers supplied by the Danish company Dynaudio.

Dangerous dragon on the outside, saloon atmosphere on the inside, is the conclusion. Of course, this comes at a price: the equivalent of 153,000 euros. The importer Noyo is now starting sales in Switzerland, but Germany and other European countries will follow in the course of the year. The M-Hero 1 is probably one of the most unusual e-cars currently on offer. But perhaps it will inspire an audience for electromobility that has not yet given it a second thought. (aum)

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## Images for article



Dongfeng M-Hero 1.

Photo: Autoren-Union Mobilität/Dongfeng



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