

# French startup Plume out to crowd-source air quality

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Plume Labs co-founder Romain Lacombe launched the startup after training for a marathon and being frustrated there were gadgets to track pace, sleep, and heart rate, but nothing check air quality

French startup Plume Labs is out to let people breath easier, whether

preparing for a marathon or just bicycling to work.

Paris-based Plume created Flow devices that people can use to measure air pollution where ever they happen to be, providing real-time information about whether it might be good for their health to go elsewhere.

Romain Lacombe joined former college friend David Lissmyr to launch the startup after training to run a marathon and being frustrated at the fact that while gadgets existed to track pace, sleep, distance, heart rate and more, there was nothing to let a runner know whether the air on one route was better than another.

"The idea is to help people deal with their environmental health better," Lacombe told AFP after speaking at the TED Conference here Tuesday.

The startup released a free Plume Air Report mobile app showing openly available air quality data from public monitoring stations, then turned to designing Flow devices people could carry around to 'crowd-source' the information themselves.

"The device lets you know where you are exposed to pollution," Plume co-founder Romain Lacombe told AFP after speaking at the TED Conference here on Tuesday.

Pre-orders of Flow devices priced at \$139 online at [flow.plumelabs.com](http://flow.plumelabs.com) have been strong, according to Lacombe, who would not disclose precise numbers.

Plume will start shipping Flow devices to buyers mid-year, he said.

Among those seeming most interested in Flow are parents of young children and "active commuters" who get to work by bicycle, skateboard

or other self-powered means, according to Lacombe.

Along with selling Flow gadgets, Plume wants to create a community to crowd-source air quality in a way similar to the way the Google navigation app Waze uses real-time driver data for live traffic maps.

"In the long term, this could be helpful to policy makers, activists, urban planners, and even companies," Lacombe said.

Flow prototypes were tested last year by volunteers in London.

"Our goal now is to scale this around the world to create a database so scientists can research pollution; politicians can make smart policies, and people can petition for change," Lacombe said.

Feedback Plume has received from users included that they trusted air quality data they collected more than that from third-parties.

"These devices, we hope, will get us a picture of reality," Lacombe said.

"Maybe there is a particular park that has a pollution issue and you should not go there."

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