Swytch DIY e-bike conversion kits: A very, very long-term review



Enlarge / There aren’t many e-bikes you can buy with rim brakes and mid-’90s gray/pink styling.
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reader comments

47 with

Recommending the Swytch e-bike conversion kit feels like recommending a DIY desktop computer upgrade. You’re not evaluating or describing any one experience so much as telling somebody that it might save them money, that it could be a fun

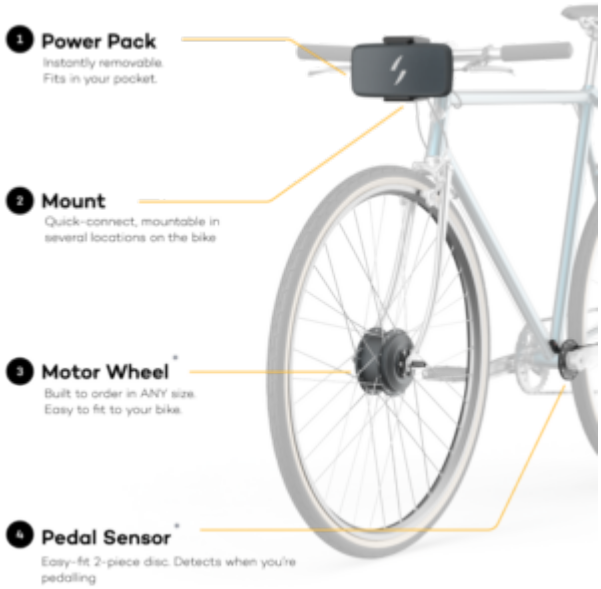
project, and that the end result can be a point of pride. Though it would be easier, you can’t replicate the upgrade experience by simply buying another bike. It all depends on what you want out of an e-bike—or a weekend project.

I’ve now converted two bikes with Swytch kits, I’ve walked my in-laws through upgrading their own cruiser-style bikes with them, and I’ve made tweaks and fixes to all of the bikes over two years. What I’ve learned is that there’s no single “Swytch kit experience” because every bike is a collection of components, and each component has dimensions and angles and quirks that play off the kit in different ways.

Some people will drop the front wheel off their bike, replace it with Swytch’s wheel, strap down a few cables with zip-ties, mount a battery, and feel the boost on their first ride a couple hours later. Some people will learn a lot more about rims, tires, and beads than they knew before or discover that their seemingly normal-looking front fork is quirky and find that the dropouts require some filing.

If you’re willing to dig into your bike just a bit, or you’ve got someone on the hook ready to do that for you, the Swytch kit is a good option to help with commutes, hills, or casual rides. It’s less helpful if you’re looking for gobs of power, prefer to own a complete second bike, or want lots of range. Small things can go wrong, and the support is far from perfect. But the end result is typically a fun upgrade and a great introduction to e-bike life.

Buying a Swytch kit: The first DIY experience



With most e-bikes, even the kind shipped directly to your house, there are only a few choices when ordering: color, frame size (typically based on height), maybe your battery size and range, and accessories.

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When you’re ordering a Swytch, you have to know (or learn) a bit more about your bike. You need your wheel size, for instance, because Swytch offers kits for 29er, 28-inch (or 700c), 26-inch, 20-inch, and Brompton-sized 16-inch tires. You pick out a wheel color (black or silver) and decide if you want an optional throttle or just pedal assist.

The big choice is between batteries: the 90 Wh, 15 kilometer (9.3 mile) Air model or the 180 Wh, 30 km (18.6-mile), can’t-take-it-on-a-plane Max version. And you have to confirm a few things about your bike, including whether you have disc or rim brakes and the width of your fork dropouts. The process has improved since my experience—you now start off by telling Swytch your bike model, or by taking a photo, and then get back a compatibility report.

The next issue is the timing. You typically can’t buy a Swytch kit from standing inventory and have it shipped within a few days. Swytch batches preorders together and ships them in broad timeframes, like “Fall 2024.” After you sign up for

their waitlist, you'll receive notice when you can order. Swytch previously told me that this helped keep prices lower and allowed the company to offer a wider array of kits and options to customers. This is likely true, but it means you have to delay your e-bike project enthusiasm by a few weeks—or maybe months.

You'll also need to consider all the accessories you'll want for your Swytch up front. Swytch doesn't make it easy to buy spare chargers, batteries, or alternative battery mounts. There's a web market for certain countries, including the U.S., but it doesn't offer everything. Your best bet is to add them onto your initial order in the order portal, which you can only access once you've been tapped for a pre-order, or to contact support (more on that later).

The price of a Swytch kit depends on your range choice, wheel size, and accessories, but they generally run between $550 and $1,200, or even $1,500 with no pre-order sale. There's an upcoming stripped-back version, frame-hung version, the Swytch Go, that's available for pre-order and purports to start at $400.

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