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First ride: Swytch MAX+ ebike conversion kit

New higher-capacity quick-release battery options with bigger range and USB-C phone charging

Swytch has updated its range of ebike conversion kits, with two new high-capacity options. The MAX+ and MAX++ conversion kits offer new 280Wh and 380Wh quick-release batteries that use the same mount as the existing MAX kit. We've had a sample of the high-capacity MAX++ kit to fit and ride for the last couple of weeks. So, what's it like?

Fitting the Swytch MAX+ kit



Swytch makes great play of how easy it is to fit its conversion kits, and in my experience that's largely true. This is the fourth or fifth time I've fitted one, and it's getting easier. The most fiddly part is always the pedal sensor and magnet ring: in order to be legal in the UK, an e-bike needs to be pedal assist (and limited to 250W and 25km/h), so it needs to know when you're turning the pedals.



The Swytch sensor zipties to your crank and your down tube, and I picked a bike that I know has enough clearance: the B'Twin Triban 100 road bike you can see in the pics. Some other bikes I've tried don't have enough space for the sensor unit as it's supplied to sit behind the magnets, and at that point I've sometimes been forced to cut off the articulated mount and just have the sensor itself sit flush against the frame. The sensor hasn't changed, and nor have bikes, so this will still be an issue for some installs.



The motor was simple enough to fit: just remove the wheel, swap the tyre, fit the new wheel and tighten the bolts. Wheels down to Brompton-friendly 16" are available. Swytch kits have historically come with a front wheel motor, and that's what I fitted; that's the easiest both because they're more standard, and also because you don't have to faff around switching cassettes and stuff. But if you want a rear-wheel motor, and there are good reasons why you might – weight distribution and grip on steep and loose surfaces are generally better – then there are rear wheel options now too, including for through-axle

bikes.

The battery bracket is very simple to fit, just requiring enough free space either side of the stem to get the mounts in place. Shims are included for all the usual bar sizes. If you have aero bars or something else esoteric you're going to struggle, but that's not really the kind of bike you're likely to be fitting it to.



The display is neat, and designed for flat handlebars, which means you won't be able to fit it directly to a drop bar, as the diameter of the mount is too small. I've used half of a bar extension thing I got from Temu, and that works really well. Then it's just a case of joining up all the wires, zip-tying them in place, and charging up the battery ready to go.

Riding the Swytch MAX+ kit

If you've seen any of the Swytch kits on ebiketips before – the last one we covered was the GO+ a year ago – then we've generally found them to be well-considered, and offering very usable power and range. In terms of those things the MAX+ and MAX++ kits are comparable with the GO+ and GO++ kits: the motors are the same, and so are the battery capacities, so you'd expect similar power and range, and that's what I've found. The Swytch hub motors are good: on this bike with me (100kg) as the rider, I never found it a struggle to get back up the hill from town. At its steepest that hill is 12% and I don't think I'd want to point this bike at anything much steeper than that, as I was bimbbling along in the lowest gear the B'Twin has (which admittedly isn't very low), but for general out-and-about riding it's fine. Swytch claims a range of up to 60 miles for the bigger of the two batteries, and as ever that's aspirational for

most folks, but 380Wh is a decent size. In hilly Bath it's probably enough for 20 miles of riding even in the highest of the motor's five power settings, and if you live somewhere flatter you might double that. It's too early to say for sure with the kit I have, but there will be a full review along presently.

This is the first Swytch kit I've personally used with the quick-release bracket, although it's been around a while. Anyway, it's excellent. It's simple to mount, the battery is easy to remove, it doesn't rattle and the cabling is pretty neat. No notes. The battery itself is reasonably large and heavy, so it will affect the centre of gravity of the bike, but I didn't feel like the handling was really compromised, and despite hitting some inevitable potholes around town the whole thing stayed put. I did add some grip compound when I fitted it, which is probably a good idea. The battery itself is nicely made and it's IPX6 waterproof, which means that there are no worries about riding in the rain even though it's in a more vulnerable position there than it is in the frame with the GO systems.



A new addition to the battery is a USB-C port on the rear, so you can charge your phone on the go “about 200 times” according to the press release, so that should be enough times for the 10-minute ride to work if you forgot to do it overnight. It's a nice addition to the kit, although I'm not sure where you're supposed to put your phone while it's charging: it's not like you can fit a bar bag.

The easily-removable battery will be especially useful where weight is an issue; if you have a folding bike you need to hoik into a car boot then removing half of the ebike system weight before you do so will be very helpful. The quick release also means it's simple to take the battery with you when you leave your bike. That means you can have it as a powerbank in the cafe, or charge it at work on their coin. Not that

it costs much to charge an ebike battery. In theory there's no rule against taking a portable powerbank and a non-electric bike on the London tube either. Just saying...



Swytch MAX+ price and ordering

The Swytch MAX+ kit is now in stock and available to purchase on Swytch's website. The RRP for the MAX+ and MAX++ kits is £999 and £1,250 respectively, but as ever Swytch is offering big discounts if you're prepared to book one and wait: that means they can commit to bigger runs, and so it's cheaper for them to produce. Anyone wanting to join the pre-order can head to <http://www.swytchbike.com/getmaxplus> to get on the list. You can expect savings of "up to 60%" according to Oliver from Swytch. Assuming that holds true this larger battery system is going to come in at around £500; given that my B'Twin donor bike only cost me £50, it's a pretty compelling ebike package for a total outlay of £550 and half an hour of my time. If you're not confident fitting it yourself then it's a simple enough job for a local bike shop to do, which will add to the cost but it's still a pretty cheap way to get a very usable ebike. As always with a third-party conversion kit you should always consider the extra forces that a motor system is going to impart on the frame or fork. I've no real concerns about my solidly-build B'Twin but I'd think twice about fitting this kit (or any other) to anything lightweight. Most bikes you'd consider fitting it to will be fine, though.

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