



PIVOT SWITCHBLADE 29 PRO XT/XTR

Price: £8,100.00 **From:** Upgrade Bikes upgradebikes.co.uk

Pivot Cycles was established in 2007 by Chris Cocalis. Way back in 1991 Chris was one of the main people behind Titus Cycles. But his story in the bike industry didn't just begin there: Cocalis was manufacturing components for the biggest brands in the years leading up to Titus taking off. Chris sold his share of the business and parted company with Titus in 2006 and created the Pivot brand thereafter.

For 2020 the Pivot Switchblade has now evolved into this all new version 2.0. Travel has increased from 135mm to 142mm, gone is the front derailleur option. The frame now has a new shock position, as well as a revised geometry over the previous outgoing model. Features like the flip chip and 27.5+ wheel compatibility have been retained, offering the rider options and versatility. The 'Switch' in the name refers to the bike's ability to run 27.5+ or 29in wheels.

If you look at the amount of travel on offer, the Switchblade sits beneath the Phoenix downhill bike and the Pivot Enduro bikes; the Firebird, a stage smashing 29er and the Mach 6 that boasts 155mm of travel and is available with either a carbon or alloy frame. Then to finish off the range, the smaller travel trail bikes include the Mach 5.5, Trail 429 and Mach 4 XC bike. The entire full suspension range employs the dw-link suspension design.

The Switchblade is available in either a bright sky

'Horizon' blue or as tested here, the natural 'Treeline' green. The three configurations of build start with 'Race' build, the middle spec 'Team' and then top option 'Pro'. Each build spec has a choice of both SRAM or Shimano and 29in or 27.5+ wheels. Pivot offers the Switchblade in sizes from XS, S, M, L and XL.

Looking closer at the carbon frame's details you will notice a neat internal cable routing system, plus a boss on the underside of the top tube and the downtube. Pivot has teamed up with bike tool supremo Topeak to produce Phoenix Dock Ninja toolboxes. These are a neat solution for riders who prefer the bike to do the carrying rather than wearing a bag. There's also enough room for a large drink bottle. Protection is fitted to the swingarm along with the bike's underside and bottom bracket shell.

With XT four pot calipers, a dinner plate (203mm) sized front disc rotor, the Fox Factory 36 fork and piggyback rear shock among other telltale signs, the Switchblade wouldn't look out of place in any multi-stage enduro race. This bike looks like it means business. The new Switchblade is marketed as the bike to take you beyond all-mountain, sharing the initial objective of the Titus Cycle design concept. With a 160mm travel fork out front and 142mm at the stern, that is a whole lot of squidge for an 'all-mountain' bike and the most



So many colour-matched components.



featured here in this test, denoting how aggressively capable the Switchblade is intended to be.

I ran this bike for the entire test period with 29er wheels and tyres. I would like to have had the chance to try it with a 'mullet' set-up with 27.5 in the rear. I did experiment with the flip chip's high and low settings and with no ground strikes to talk of, I decided that I prefer the bike in the lower setting for the 29er wheelset.

This bike really is dripping in top-end componentry – with flashes of gold Kashima, XTR and the striking decals on the Reynolds carbon wheels, this bike looks every bit the real deal. Let's see if it lives up to its 'Pro' model label.

Straight tubes and massive standover room.



That's 157mm Super Boost Plus to you.



Frame	Carbon dw-link 142mm rear travel
Fork	Fox Factory 36, 44mm offset, GRIP2 160mm
Shock	Fox Factory Float DPX2 (metric)
Hubs	Industry Nine
Rims	Reynolds Blacklabel Enduro Wide Trail
Tyres	Maxxis Minion 29in DHF 2.5in/DHR II 2.4in
Chainset	Race Face Aeffect R 32T chainring
Rear Mech	Shimano XTR 12-speed
Shifters	Shimano XT 12-speed

Cassette	Shimano XT 10-51T
Brakes	Shimano XT F203mm R180mm
Stem	Phoenix Team Enduro/Trail 45mm
Bars	Phoenix Team Low Rise Carbon 780mm
Grips	Phoenix Factory Lock-On
Seatpost	Fox Factory Transfer 175mm, 30.9mm
Saddle	WTB Pro Vigo
Size Tested	Large
Weight	14.34kg/ 31.6lbs

The Ride

My initial thought was just how capable the bike felt and how silently it goes about its business even on the roughest of trails – aside from the Industry Nine rear hub that I likened to an agitated rattlesnake. However, the pick-up engagement of the I9 hub and the weight of the carbon Reynolds rims are a match made in heaven, propelling me like a rocket out of the blocks. The rims create a nice wide profile for the Maxxis rubber and stood up to all the abuse I could throw at them during the test period.

The Pivot ploughed through technical sections, leaving me to grit my teeth and hold on for dear life. The mismatched front and rear travel didn’t hamper the beast at all with the 29er wheels rolling over roots and holes not knocking the Pivot out of its stride while descending at full gallop. Even in its lowest setting I didn’t have any trouble with pedal strikes on more natural trails.

Downhill, the Switchblade works beautifully, a tall and roomy enough front end (470mm reach on large) puts the rider in the right position to attack, while the short 431mm chainstays give the bike its balance.

The pairing of the dw-link suspension system, 29er wheels and Fox Factory Float DPX2 shock means the Switchblade takes bumps well within its stride. Compared to the others on test, I didn’t feel the need to pick the bike up as much through the roughest sections. I could plough my way through braking bumps and repeated deep holes, just letting the bike do the work.

It was difficult to get the Switchblade out of its depth, with the harsher landings and drops taken comfortably, leading me to think it has more travel than what is on offer. There is a beautiful composure with the Pivot Switchblade that becomes apparent in natural winding singletrack trails. The bike wants to be pushed hard and ridden aggressively, the dw-link and progressive rear shock tune allows you to do this.

The Switchblade’s climbing game is strong with plenty of grip on the rear tyre with no need to use the shock lockout, though the front wheel did lift occasionally on steeper sections. The dw-link suspension proved to be efficient

and supportive during pedalling efforts, especially when combined with the steepish seat tube angle of 75.5°. The bike is light enough to combat the longest of climbs with a seated approach. I expect the majority of riders on this bike have more of an all-day ‘winch and drop’ strategy, rather than using this as an all-out cross-country whippet.

I don’t have the world’s biggest feet, but I do ride with flat pedals and yet I didn’t experience any clearance or seat stay rubbing with the Super Boost Plus (12x157mm) rear hub spacing. So this produces a stronger rear wheel, refined chain alignment and on top of this also more tyre clearance with no issues of heel clattering. Then this is an all-round win, unless you were hoping to slot a pair of existing wheels into the frame of course.

Overall

This bike in the right hands would see some serious personal bests or KOMs if that’s your thing. That is how the bike felt for me: fast! It’s more than an ‘all-mountain’ bike, for me it’s more of a racer.

The Pivot did feel a tad cumbersome and awkward at slower speeds while in the tightest of turns, the bike needs a tad more manhandling compared to the other two bikes on test; I put that down to the gnarly build of this weapon.

I really enjoyed my time spent on this bike at my local trails, scaring myself a few times going into sections carrying so much more speed than I’m used to. For the type of natural technical trail riding I enjoy, the Switchblade really excels, particularly when going down. That is not to say that this bike would not also be great in a more man-made or graded bike park – just be prepared for some serious speed.

The Pivot is a hooligan – it possesses the perfect blend of capability in the rough with a big burly Fox 36 out front, yet with the dw-link suspension it pedals so well I can still enjoy winching my local fire roads without having to worry about faffing around constantly reaching for the lockout lever. It’s good on my home trails and I’m certain it would really come into its own while away on holiday in big mountain country.

