

Custom Motorcycle Kit Bike

- There are big parts distributors out there who sell a Custom bike in kit form. Some are complete with everything you will need to finish your bike. Some will contain all the main parts including engine and transmission and some will be a rolling chassis which usually has all the main chassis parts including forks/wheels/forward controls. It is important to find out what is in each kit, especially when you need to compare different kit prices, rolling chassis kits and buying the parts individually.
- Take a critical look at the contents of any kit. Kits can contain a lot of cheap and sometimes low quality parts which could explain their very attractive price. Take heed of that oft quoted maxim 'you only get what you pay for'! The nuts/bolts supplied with kits may be very low quality and you may have to budget to replace these with better quality ones during your build. This is not necessarily a total negative. Replacing a few small parts is a low cost consideration compared with the much higher cost parts.
- To get your bike through any pre-registration test, you may be required to have a legal exhaust and to have specific other parts like indicators/mirrors of a certain size. License plate may have to be a specific size and mounted at a certain point. Therefore some kit parts will have to be replaced at an additional cost, which has to be allowed for during the planning stage. Don't underestimate or ignore this additional cost.
- There is usually only a small range of styles available. Does this satisfy 'your' design requirements? If it doesn't, don't buy it or you could be putting yourself in the position you would have been in had you decided to buy a stock bike. You may need to remind yourself that you are building a personal and uniquely different motorcycle. Some compromise may be necessary to get your bike on the road, but wholesale compromise may be too much to stomach. It's your call and only you can decide. Pictures of these kit bikes in brochures will be painted in colours you may not like. You have to imagine this bike in your colour scheme before you decide to accept or reject it as the basis for your custom bike.
- Find out if your kit requires any skilled fabrication or contains only bolt together parts. Wheel/axle spacers may not be included and you may have to source these parts yourself. Outsourcing of fabrication and other skills is an additional cost to you which you or may not have budgeted for.
- The more complete a kit bike is the more likely there will be a few parts missing or wrong. Find out before you buy your kit about the warrantee conditions. There is likely to be some time limits for making any claim and you may have to count all the parts as soon as you take delivery. I know personally of one parts distributor who makes clear they will not honour any warrantee for a kit bike, before any purchase. They obviously have some experience of such kits which is not too complementary!
- Rolling chassis. These often make a very good buy. Not only will you expect to get an affordable collection of parts along with up to 10% reduction in price, you will usually not have to make any compromise on your chosen design. Some suppliers allow you to design your own rolling chassis kits which are an ideal option.
- Some dealers offer a deal to build/test/register your kit bike for a specified one off payment. Again, ensure this covers everything, and ensure you achieve your design goals.
- Kits don't come with any instructions and torque settings for various nuts/bolts will be absent. You will need to purchase a HD or Clymer manual. Check which manual is the most useful before you buy one
- When you receive your kit you are faced with a mountain of parts, many small parts and the problem of 'is it all here' you must quickly assess if it is all there and hopefully there is a checklist to work from.
- Kit bikes are not necessarily going to fit together as easily as a Lego kit. A CCI kit I had needed metal ground off the suspension mount on the swingarm and the head of the shock bolt just to make it function. You might find different fitment problems with different kits that require modification. If modifications can't be made safely then you need to use the warrantee. If you have bought from a local supplier you also have access to the local legal services. If you have bought direct across continents then redress will be dependant on goodwill. When choosing your kit bike, choose your supplier using the same care and good sense.