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Electrical safety first questions and answers

I get an amazing number of questions that either (1) I can't answer without knowing much more details than the reader provides, (2) the reader can answer as easily as I can, or (3) involves asking SmarterTravel.com to do something we don't do. Below you will find answers to frequently asked questions. Reading the answers before you ask one of these questions will save you time and help you find the answer yourself. Where should we go? I would need a 600-page book or an all-day discussion to answer that question in any useful way. To be of any help at all, I would first know enough about you: what kind of family or group you have, what kind of climate you have, how much time you have, what are your budget goals or limitations, whether you want luxury or simplicity, whether you prefer bright lights or loneliness, what kind of activities you are interested in, what kind of climate you prefer, whether your grandchildren or your dog will go with you, and up, and on, and on. Surprisingly, some readers who ask about where to go don't even say where they live and will begin their journey. Sorry, guys, the only way I can help is when you ask questions that are much more specific. If you are completely sure of what you want to do, my best recommendations are that you (1) read many travel publications, (2) log in to many destination websites, and (3) find a good travel agent who is skilled at handling questions like this. When should we visit? As with where you question, the best time to visit question depends on how you set the best time: lower prices, minimal crowds, wider range of activities, warmer/colder/drier/wetter climate, and up, and up. In terms of cost, the answer is almost always in the low season, but that may not be what you really want. What's the fare? I get this probably more than any other, and it's a little amazing. If you go as far as AskEd & Answered, obviously you're already on SmarterTravel.com. And right there, on our bright new homepage, top right, is our fare search portal: you can search for airfare, hotel, car rental, holidays and cruise prices. If you don't like our search system, there are dozens of others. Don't you think we have secret ways to get to airfares that aren't available to you? We're not doing this. We need to do the same research as you. If you're asking about a trip that the usual U.S.-based search engines don't handle, a good place to try is ETN, where you can submit a trip anywhere in the world and have ticket agents meet with the best their own. And if you're starting your trip to another country, the best bet is to find a local discount travel agency, online or offline, in that country. Can you arrange my trip/ sell me a ticket? Not. SmarterTravel.com not organize trips or sell tickets. Any tickets. If you're only looking for schedule information, scroll up right to Travel Tools, where one of the options in the drop-down menu is Flight Plans. Other Other include a hotel tracker and links to providers selling all types of travel. What are the requirements? Several readers ask about various requirements and restrictions, especially for air travel, but also for travel documents. You could answer almost all of these questions by simply Googling the question. Here are places to search for some of your most frequently asked questions: Airline Baggage Limits: Each airline details its online baggage policy. Simply log on to the airline's website and look for a link to the luggage. If you don't see it in a drop-down menu, go to Search Location or Site Map. (Incidentally, when you search, the official term is luggage, not luggage; luggage is what you buy in a store; when you put your stuff in it and take it on a trip, it becomes luggage.) Permitted items in hand luggage: The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) maintains a list of operations and not for carry-on items. Passport and visa requirements: The State Department's travel information homepage has one button for information about travel abroad by U.S. citizens and another for detailed passport information. The information button leads to detailed lists of visa requirements for entry to any country in the world. Is it safe to visit? No one can answer whether you'll be safe visiting any foreign country-or anywhere in the U.S., for that matter. However, the State Department is assembling an extensive database of data on global countries, including warnings about places to avoid and more general information about what visitors can expect. Click on Travel Warnings from the State Department's travel page for information on hot spots and Consular Information Bulletins for other places. Where should I complain? Most travel suppliers report an address for complaints, or at least one address contact us, somewhere on their website. You can easily find them. And you can forget to make a big fuss by sending a registered return receipt letter or express mail to the CEO— it will end up in the same complaints office. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) makes it even easier to voice your airline's complaints. Its website lists the current name, email address, phone, and email address for the complaint offices of all major American airlines. If you want, you can file a complaint with dot. And dot also provides extensive information about rights you do and do not have as an air traveler. A few months ago we published a piece entitled: Should I buy an electric bike? Here's everything you need to know to get started! It created quite a bit of interest as well as a few additional questions about electric bikes (obviously this piece doesn't cover literally everything). So today, we answer the top questions that have been unanswered in the past with the considerable help of Boris Mordkovich, the CEO & Co-Founder of EVELO Electric Bicycle Company (producing stylish and comfortable e-bikes for 99% of people who are not cyclists). He writes regularly the electric bicycle industry on its blog in Behind the Scenes. Lets Get Started: Q: Can You Still Get Exercise on an Electric Bike? A: Absolutely. It's really the big paradox - people think that electric bikes are for people who don't want to exercise, but in fact the exact opposite is true. People get electric bikes (rather than a scooter or motorcycle) especially because they want to exercise more and be more active. Electric bikes make driving accessible to 99% of the population who are not regular cyclists already. For some people, it's the fear of hills or going away and not being able to return easily that keeps them from cycling. For others, it's the limitations of health, age or athletic ability. For many people thinking about commuting, it's the hassle of arriving at their destination sweaty. The question for those people then becomes: is it better to use a hybrid electric bike that allows you to pedal as long as you feel comfortable or just continue to use other modes of transportation that were used before, especially cars. Once you make it easy for people to drive - regardless of where they live or their physical ability - you will find that people start cycling regularly because they always know they can safely reach their destination even if they are hilly or tired. Remember that they are still pedaling all the way - but they regulate how hard or easy they want to be. I've seen a lot of comments from people about why electric bikes became a gateway to cycling in general. They can initially use the electric bike with a lot of help from the engine, but as they create their power and endurance, they reduce the level of assistance or turn it off completely. EVELO/ Promo image Q: What do you think about licensed ebikes in places where motor vehicles are not allowed, such as bike paths? I believe that this is an excellent example of policies and rules that are being made without trying to understand the issue behind them. In most places, the reasons behind these rules are two-way: • to control pollution and noise; We see this a lot in a variety of national parks and natural areas. In most cases, rules and regulations have been applied to prevent gas-powered vehicles, such as mopeds. Due to their size, these vehicles were possible, did not meet emission standards and posed a real risk to the surrounding nature. The problem is that the rules are rarely updated, and in many cases they cannot be with age or technology. The fact of the matter is that electric motors are close to silent. They are electronically limited to a safe speed of up to 20 mph, which is about the same bike tactics can achieve. They also do not produce emissions of any kind. There's no logical reason to mess with the old cars. Concerns about pedestrian safety regarding the electric bike. Although concerns about what will be if a pedestrian is hit by an electric bike rider is valid, they lose an important point. When the rules are made, politicians bring together electric bikes with heavy, motorized scooters. However, a real electric bike looks, feels and handles like a traditional bike. It weighs a little more because of the batteries and engine (e.g. 55 pounds for an electric bike vs. 35 pounds for a normal bike). However, when taking into account the weight of the average - rider 170-180 pounds - the overall difference negligible. In fact, an electric bike would cause the same damage if a pedestrian had been hit as a traditional bike traveling at the same speed. And remember - electric bikes are limited to trips with a maximum of 20 mph, which is comparable to the speed of a normal bike. I believe that many of the rules concerning this are made in response to accidents involving electric scooters without a licence, not real electric bicycles. However, due to a poor understanding of the options on the market, electric bikes are wrong in the same category. Q: Is it dangerous to have ebike riders mixed on the same paths and trails as regular cyclists? A: That's a good question. To address this, it is important to understand some of the basic specifications of an electric bicycle medium. Under the law electric bikes are limited to a maximum speed of 20 mph. This is comparable to the speed you can achieve on a traditional bike. In fact, most road bikes can go well above that. In addition, the weight difference between an electric bicycle and a normal bicycle is negligible when the rider's weight is taken into account. A 180-pound rider on a 60-pound electric bike is just about 15% heavier than the same rider on a traditional 30-pound bike. Think of it as riding a bike with an extra bag of books or shopping. Does this really make you significantly more dangerous to fellow cyclists or pedestrians? This means that the effects of a crash involving an ebike will be similar or milder than those involving traditional bikes. The important thing is to practice common courtesy and street rules. Do not drive against traffic or sidewalks. Don't turn on red lights. Give it the right way with others when it's right. I firmly believe that regular cyclists and those who ride electric bikes should learn to share the road and be more accepting of each other's choices. Q: Should eBikes be allowed in cities like New York? Yes. Electric bikes have been the subject of much controversy in New York for several years. Many of the issues surrounding electric bikes began to come as a result of the Riding behavior exhibited by food delivery staff in Manhattan who often drive on sidewalks or against traffic using scooter-like electric bikes. Such bikes have just operated pedals that are there simply to avoid registering them as motor vehicles. They are large, heavy, and - if used incorrectly (i.e. driven on the pavement) - can be dangerous. Dangerous, there are still many misunderstandings about electric bicycles between the population and politicians who tend not to discriminate between scooters with electric powerful electric motors weighing 100-200 kg or more and bicycles with small electric assistive machines. These misunderstandings are what caused e-bikes to have a bad image in New York as a result. In 2009, electric bikes were banned from The Streets of New York. The ban, however, was generally not implemented and was mainly on paper. There is an interesting article on this subject in the New York Times. This happened again in 2011 and then in mid-2013. In short, there seems to be a trend - every two years a new fine or a law gets passed which leads to a lot of media coverage discussing the state of electric bicycles in New York. However, right now, there are two bills currently working their way through the Senate and the New York Assembly that will eventually fix and legalize electric bikes in New York state and therefore New York. One can be found here. The other one can be found here. These bills, when passed, will fully fix and legalize electric bikes in New York, as long as they meet federal guidelines that state that an electric bike is to be classified as a bicycle rather than a motor vehicle (hence enjoying all the same privileges as traditional cycles, as there are no licence requirements for the operation of one, there are no insurance or registration requirements and the ability to drive them on the bike paths) as long as it complies with the following rules/specifications: • It has functional pedals; • It does not exceed the speed of 20 miles per hour; • It has an engine not exceeding 750 watts. Overall, New York is working hard to improve their cycling infrastructure now. They are adding more lanes, increasing their bike share program, and actively encouraging more people to take up cycling. By removing all this confusion about electric bikes, it will take it a huge step in the right direction, since it will allow a whole new segment of the population - those who live in hilly areas, or far away from work, or are simply intimidated by cycling - to start riding. As with regular bikes, we must certainly impose common driving rules, such as not riding on the pavement or against the flow of traffic, but these things are just as applicable to regular cyclists as they are to folks who use electric bikes. EVELO/ Promo image Q: Is it true eBikes are difficult to carry up and down stairs? A: Electric bikes are heavier than their traditional counterparts. Not way to get around it. To understand the difference, you can imagine a normal mountain bike weighing about 30 pounds. Then you need to add an engine, battery and controller that will add up to another £30 or so, so the full package will be around £60. However, there are a few ways to get around it! A trick works great if your electric bike has a throttle. When Climbing the stairs, simply place the bike in the direction you are walking and use the throttle gently - as a result, the bike will climb almost the stairs itself, with little guidance from you. Another trick is to remove the battery from the frame. It takes a second and reduces the weight of the bike by almost 10 weight - in which case the difference is much less noticeable. We've also seen a lot of people keep their electric bike in the basement or warehouse of the building - just removing the battery and taking the top for charging. So while the extra weight is definitely there, there are ways to get around it. Q: Are there benefits to buying an eBike versus making one yourself? A: In addition to saving countless hours figuring out and building an electric bike? Absolutely! One of the key benefits is that ready-made electric bikes are designed from the ground up. This means that all the parts of the bike, electrical and other, are made to work well together. Everything was tested before it was packed in a box and sent to you. Even frames are made to carry wiring inside frame tubes, making the bike much more waterproof and elegant. On top of that, if you ever run into problems, you'll have a dedicated support department to turn to. While when you build a bike from multiple components, it can be very difficult to avoid running around. Electric bikes are still a fairly new product and while the maintenance required is quite small, things can still go wrong. Being able to call a toll-free customer service number and get answers to your questions 7 days a week is very helpful. Q: Are there ways to try an ebike before you buy one? A: Of course. While rare, bike shops specializing in ebikes are starting to show up all over the country. Unfortunately, they are still few and far between and their inventory is usually limited to just a few brands. However, it's a good place to start. Some companies will also connect you with their existing customers, so you can meet, ask questions and try a bike from a real customer. If, after a trial run you're convinced, you'll need to continue your Google search. Compare the chips and make a short list. Then make 1-2 calls to customer service or open a sales ticket and see how quickly they respond. It's important to get an answer within a day or two because it will be a very good indication of how quickly you respond if things go wrong down the line. Customer reviews are also a great way to rate bikes you don't have Access. Only look at brands that are often reviewed and mostly get positive reviews. When you look at reviews, look to see the specific things people stress. If something seems vague or disturbing, report it to the company. Remember that nothing is perfect and every product out there is sure to have some negative feedback. Take it as a positive, as a way to understand the disadvantages of a product a long-term test and to help you understand if they are deal breakers for you. Q: Do electric bikes break more often than regular bikes? A: Electric bikes don't break more often than their traditional counterparts. On a typical electric bike, 80% of all accessories are typical bike parts anyway - remember it's still a bike. Most of the ingredients that make up the electric part are quite maintenance free nowadays. There aren't many moving parts in an average electric motor. Modern brush machines can have very few parts that can wear out (such as brushes on older brushed motors). Batteries from good quality manufacturers such as Panasonic, Samsung, and others, can last for years with little care. On a good electric bike, the electric part can only surpass the bike part. Again, big thanks to Boris Mordkovich, CEO & Co-Founder of EVELO Electric Bicycle Company (production of elegant and shabby electronic bicycles for 99% of people who are not cyclists) for sharing his experience with TreeHugger. If you want more from Boris, check out his e-bike blog: Behind the Scenes. Scenes.