

Review: Many choices, indecision with Apple Watch

April 11 2015, by Anick Jesdanun



Ricky Lea examines Apple's new watch, which could only be bought as a pre-order online, Friday, April 10, 2015, in New York. The first new gadget under CEO Tim Cook is selling in eight countries and Hong Kong, with shipments scheduled to start April 24. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

Of the 13 Apple Watch models I tried over two sessions, the one I liked most cost \$15,000.

Oops—where's my raise?

Both sessions at the Apple store began with indecision: What size do I want? Which band do I prefer? I didn't have good answers as my Apple Watch try-on visits started—at first modestly, with models that cost about the same as an iPhone.

The try-on session typically begins with making an appointment online. If you're looking for a luxury "Edition" made of 18-karat gold alloy, you specify that. Only some stores offer those, including the one I visited on New York's Upper West Side. I bypassed the appointments because Apple's media reps in Cupertino, California, had arranged my sessions. Stores will try to accommodate walk-ins, but appointments are encouraged.

As someone who can't decide what to eat for lunch, I expected to be told which watch I wanted. Sensing my indecision, the employees in both cases picked one just to get started.

I began with a smaller version of the [stainless steel](#) case, with a brown leather band called Modern Buckle (\$749). The band looks like a leather strap you buckle, but has magnetic clasps. It felt loose, even at the tightest setting. I was told not every band is going to fit every wrist.

I then tried a large stainless steel case with a black leather loop (\$699)—also clasped magnetically, but without the holes you normally see with a buckle. The band comes in two sizes, but only the large one was available for trying. It was too long.



The Apple Watch appears on display, Friday, April 10, 2015, in New York. Apple has started taking orders for the watch on its website and the Apple Store app. Currently, that's the only way Apple is selling the watch, with shipments scheduled to start April 24. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

It turns out stores don't have all 54 configurations available for trying out. Most stations have 18 watches to choose from, locked in a drawer that requires a tap from the employee's security device. You get a feel, but not necessarily in your color or length.

I tried the Modern Buckle again, this time in black. Still loose. That was followed by large and small cases with a classic buckle. The fit was much better. I also tried models with a synthetic-rubber sports band and a stainless steel link bracelet.



A child looks at a display of Apple Watches at an Apple retail store in Beijing Friday, April 10, 2015. From Beijing to Paris to San Francisco, the Apple Watch made its debut Friday. Customers were invited to try them on in stores and order them online. China was among countries where the watch had its global debut Friday, reflecting the country's fast-growing status as one of Apple's most important markets. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Bands are easily interchangeable by pressing a release button, and some are sold separately. I can use the sports band for running and a classic

buckle for regular wear. Likewise, individual links on the bracelet can be removed without special tools. But the try-on visits aren't set up for that. Nor are they set up for lefties; everything will appear upside down in the watches' demonstration mode. You can change that—once you buy it.

I returned several hours later to meet with an Edition specialist.



Customers examine Apple's new watch, which could only be bought pre-order online, Friday, April 10, 2015, in New York. The first new gadget under CEO Tim Cook is selling in eight countries and Hong Kong, with shipments scheduled to start April 24. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

I wasn't feted with chocolate and champagne, but I did get a more personalized experience. You're taken to a private room in some stores, but mine didn't have one, so luxury appointments are done on the main floor, to the side.

As the specialist assisted me, another employee went into a backroom to bring out specific models on request—in nice boxes that give the watch a luxury feel, while doubling as a charger (there's a charging port in the back). The process wasn't as quick as I expected, but what's the rush when you're ready to spend \$10,000 to \$17,000?



A customer looks at a line of Apple's new watches displayed at a store in San Francisco, Friday, April 10, 2015. Apple has started taking orders for the watch on its website and the Apple Store app. Currently, that's the only way Apple is selling the watch, with shipments scheduled to start April 24. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

I tried one with a blue classic leather buckle (\$15,000) and another with a white sports band (\$12,000). The synthetic-rubber sports band looked out of place on a case made of gold alloy, but the gold clasp matches. Likewise, the metal on the buckle straps are also gold to match.

I tried four others from non-luxury lines. One also had a classic buckle to get a feel for the difference in weight. At 69 grams, or 2.4 ounces, the gold model I tried is 38 percent heavier than stainless steel. I didn't notice it, though, until someone pointed it out.

Apple does offer six configurations for \$17,000, but my specialist says they are designed for women. The \$15,000 blue buckle I tried was one of the two priciest for men. It fits nicely on my wrist and looks sharp—possibly because it just feels rich. I'm sure the other ones will work just fine, including the cheapest ones at \$349 for the small case and \$399 for large.



A customer examines Apple's new watch, Friday, April 10, 2015, in New York. Apple has started taking orders for the watch on its website and the Apple Store app. Currently, that's the only way Apple is selling the watch, with shipments scheduled to start April 24. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

So which of the others to choose?

Urgh. Indecision.

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