

Product Evaluation: Bike Gear

Dowco Fastrax Saddlebags

In the world of add-on motorcycle luggage, there are saddlebags and then there are Elite Saddlebags. These are the new Dowco Fastrax Elite Series Saddlebags — lightweight, durable, expandable, chock-full of features, and customizable to whatever you ride. I'm amazed by what these can do. All the handy features are built-in, integrated, and coordinated. There are no after-

thoughts here; Dowco obviously started with a clean slate and engineered these bags to contain everything you might ever need in a saddlebag in one complete package.

The body is made from tough 1,680-denier polyester textile with carbon fiber-patterned vinyl and reflective accents. The

Fastrax Elite bags are 16.5 x 8 x 7", with an additional 4" adjustable drop-down padded expansion floor — plenty of room for a four-day trip. There are four D-rings on the outside to help secure the bags to the bike, and provided shoulder straps attach to the D-rings for carrying the bags when they're off the bike. Or you could just use the molded

handles at the rear for toting. I was especially taken with the securing straps. They're not bungee cords, and there are no buckles; instead, these are purpose-built saddlebag securing straps. They snap in place and cinch up easily.

The waterproof zippers and attached rain covers compress into their own storage compartments, and there's a clear panel over the audio/electronics storage compartment with a port for wires. For extra carrying capacity, there's an external storage panel with draw-tight expansion and Velcro straps. The interior features a zippered pocket inside the lid and a netted cargo hold-down.

Several fabric swatches — black, blue, green, orange, pink, red, silver, white, and yellow — are included for color-matching the luggage to your motorcycle. Just slip the appropriate color panel into the outside pocket. Antitheft security is addressed with two steel wire cables and zippers that are lockable (padlocks not included). Dowco is rightly proud of its Elite Series and provides a lifetime warranty. — Steve Lita



Five included securing straps feature an innovative click-on feature and rubberized stripes on the fabric to maintain their grip.



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