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REVIEW: Dowco Iron Rider Luggage Mix different pieces depending on your needs

By Genevieve Schmitt, Editor
2/13/2008

Printer friendly version

I can never have too many choices for motorcycle luggage. I've been riding for almost 20 years and it seems every time I go on a trip, I have a new set of backrest bags I'm using or in this, case, testing. The latest set I put through it paces is Dowco's Iron Rider Luggage System. The system consists of five separate bags that can be mixed and matched depending what your storage needs are for that trip. The bags in the set are: a main bag, overnight bag, garment bag, roll bag, and computer briefcase.



The Main Bag and the Garment Bag shown stacked on top of each other. D-rings are for straps that attach the two together.

I tested the main bag on one trip because that's all I needed. And on another trip, I took the main bag and the garment bag. The most that's recommended stacking are three pieces. Any higher and you run the risk of the bags being top heavy.

Storage Capacity

The main bag carried a week's worth of clothing to Sturgis and back. Of course, I also had saddlebags available to fill. The main bag is the largest bag at 1.26 cubic feet. How much carrying space does that translate to? See picture below:



The Main Bag fit five T-shirts, two pairs of jeans, socks, underwear, and comfy lounging pants. Plus, that black case on top is my 12-inch laptop computer.

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The main bag has ample room for most needs. The roomy side pockets are where I stuffed my socks and bandannas. The exterior elastic net pocket on either side are perfect for items you need to get at easily while riding like a map and sunscreen.



This picture shows the expandable zippered side pocket on the main bag and the exterior net pocket.

The garment bag is unique because it's made for a motorcycle. It has an inside liner bag that holds up to six wire hangers. A hook on the top of the bag lets you hang the open bag on a wall or closet.



The wall hook of the garment bag is tucked under a flap on top of the bag.

Your clothes don't lie in the bag completely flat, rather you tri-fold the liner bag with your clothes inside and place it inside the larger compartment. I could fit three or four nice shirts and a pair of jeans without wrinkling. Anything more, the bag starts to get pretty stuffed. Overall I was impressed with the storage capacity of both bags.



The Garment Bag with the liner folded up.

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The Garment Bag hooks to a door or wall and the inside liner bag unfolds.

The bags are made from a durable polyester that's water resistant, not waterproof. A rain cover comes with each bag. The bags feel tough and sturdy, not flimsy. Mine held up just fine after a whole riding season. Dirt and grime washes right off with a wet sponge.



The sturdy rubber diamond plate design on the bottom of each luggage provides extra traction when one piece is stacked on another. Plus, the bottom is extra durable for when you set it on the ground.

I appreciate the thoughtful features that set these bags apart from others: molded rubber handles that make them easy to carry; a sturdy rubber bottom with diamond plate design that provides traction for keeping your bag from sliding off the seat or luggage rack; large zipper pulls that make them easy to grab with gloves on; and sturdy zipper seams that are concealed with a weather flap.



Weather flaps hide the zippers, but long zipper pulls allow you to get at the zippers easily.

Included with each bag are straps and D-rings that attach each bag to another. The main bag is the anchor bag, the one to which you attach the other bags. It has Velcro straps so it can secure to a backrest. I never trust those straps as the sole method for

keeping my luggage secured to the bike so I use bungee cords to secure the bag additionally.



This is how I bungeed the Main Bag to the bag seat of the bike I rode to Sturgis.

The computer briefcase bag that's part of the set is designed specifically for a motorcycle with straps that secure it to the main bag only, or to the bike. Lots of room inside accommodates more than a standard laptop. Notebooks and files fit as well. Great bag for motorcycle commuters!

A shoulder strap comes with the garment bag, roll bag, and computer bag. The only thing that did not work for me is that the main bag does not come with a carrying handle. That bag ends up being the heaviest and was cumbersome to carry without a handle. I'm guessing a handle on top would get in the way because the other bags are being stacked on top of it.

The main bag, when the expandable side pockets are unzipped, make the bag wide so I would only use it on wide bucket seats or luggage racks. It would hang off narrow seats too much. The other bags are not as wide and would work well as stand alone bags on just about any style of motorcycle.



The Roll Bag makes an ideal piece of "day" luggage, perfect for carrying an extra layer and a rain suit.



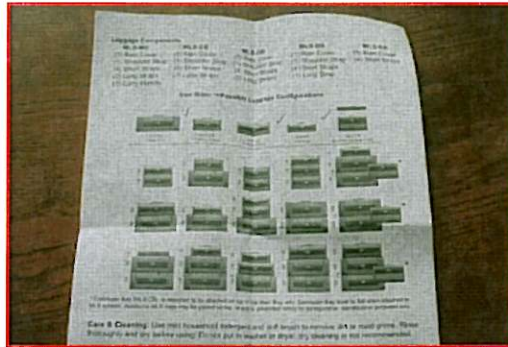
The inside of the Roll Bag is like all the others in that it has an elastic net compartment on either side. Each luggage piece comes with a set of straps shown here in this plastic bag.

Prices are reasonable for the quality and space this system gives you. It comes with a two-year warranty.

Main Bag \$109.95

Overnight Bag: \$69.95

Roll Bag: \$39.95
Garment Bag \$89.95
Commuter Briefcase \$89.95



Instructions included with each bag show 15 different luggage configurations. Additionally, very good detailed instructions explain how to strap the bags together.

Dowco products, maker of motorcycle covers as well, are sold at most motorcycle dealerships. Visit Dowco-Inc.com for more information.



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