



MODULAR SOLUTIONS

Dowco Iron Rider Luggage System

review and photography by Buzz Buzzelli

There are some awesome sissy-bar-mounted luggage systems available for Harley-Davidson motorcycles these days. Most are giant storage bags that hold a week's worth of gear, while others are modular, consisting of a group of smaller bags that can be conveniently lashed together.

I have used those large one-bag options for travel, and found a couple of disadvantages. One, the gear can be hard to access when it's all compressed in one big bag. Two, the bag can be very heavy and awkward to carry. And three, it can be just too big for those shorter trips that don't require a huge cavernous bag. On the other hand, a modular system allows you to use just the right-sized bag, or bags, for the trip. Dowco's Iron Rider luggage system is modular, and that's where this system excels.

The Dowco Iron Rider system consists of five different bags: the Main Bag (MLS-MB) is the largest with almost 2.0 cubic feet of storage space; the Overnight Bag (MLS-OB) holds about 1.0 cubic feet; the Roll Bag (MLS-RB) holds a modest 0.5 cubic feet; the Garment Bag (MLS-GB) is designed to keep clothes unruffled; and finally the Commuter Briefcase (MLS-CB) performs as a briefcase for standard-sized laptops and other business-like material. For the kind of travel I do (not needing a garment or computer bag), I selected the Main and Overnight models.

The bags are constructed of 1680 polyester with rigid ABS reinforcement to help hold their shape. A rubber diamond-plate base resists movement while rolling down the road. Stress points have riveted fasteners, and the zippers have pulls with extenders that help you get a grip on them. Each piece has a detachable carrying handle and an additional detachable shoulder strap. A rain cover is included with the three units I tested, but curiously the garment and computer bag do not include a rain cover.

I used the Overnight Bag the most (part number 50126-00, MSRP \$69.95), whether around town or on an overnight trip. It's large enough to hold a minimal amount of clothes for a weekend trip, pick up a few groceries, or stash a half-head helmet, yet it's small enough that



The Iron Rider system offers flexible and adequate storage for any travel situation.

it doesn't dominate a Harley's appearance. There are two outside zippered stash pockets on each end, a single outer mesh pocket that serves well as a water-bottle holder, and two inside mesh pockets for stashing the various straps, rain cover, or other items that you wish to keep separate for easy access.

Like the Overnight Bag, the Main Bag (part number 50125-00, MSRP

\$109.95) has the inner mesh pockets, two zippered outer pouches and a mesh pocket. It also has the added advantage of being expandable. This expansion, however, does not increase the main compartment's size, it enlarges the two outside end pockets. A single full-head helmet will fit in the main compartment, but little more. Adding the Overnight Bag gives a total of 3.5 cubic feet of

packing space.

Between any three bags that Dowco offers, there are about 15 different ways of combining them. Add two other models and the combinations of bags are dizzying. You can get two Main bags and/or two Overnight Bags to create a "his and hers" system, which simplifies packing for two.

To mount the base bag to the sissy bar, there are twin 2-inch-wide Velcro straps that surround the sissy bar and adjustable web straps to tie it in place. Once secured, the other bags connect with adjustable web straps that have simple snap-on hooks. It only takes a few minutes to secure a couple of Iron Rider bags.

If you need to pack tons o' gear for an extended trip, a single large bag might serve better for sheer volume, but for versatility and the convenience of separating different types of gear, the Iron Rider's modular system has the advantage.

For further information contact Dowco Inc., 800-558-7755, www.dowco-inc.com.



The bags featured here come with (right to left) a rain cover, hold-down straps, inter-bag attachment straps, a carrying strap and a removable handle.

These Cross

100 Spoke Classic

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These Don't

100 Spoke Radial
painted hub & nip option