



## GUIDE TO CHOOSING MOTORCYCLE LUGGAGE

Your first decision when buying luggage is whether to choose bags specifically designed for the exact measurements of your bike, or universal fit bags. Universal bags are suitable to be installed on most bikes, but will require adjustment or modifications to fit your motorcycle exactly. They tend to be lower in cost, widely available and offer a broader range of styling and feature options, but may take increased installation effort. Specific fit bags tend to be more expensive and have less choice of styles and features, but will fit exactly.

There is a multitude of different luggage options on the market – here is a quick guide to the main types:



### *Saddlebags*

Motorcycle saddlebags were initially designed for horses and although they continue to be mounted in pairs on the sides of the motorbike behind the rider, they have come a long way from those original designs. Saddlebags are popular choices for all types and styles of motorcycles because of their convenient location and low mounting height that concentrates weight low for best handling.

Saddlebag variety is nearly endless; multiple sizes, shapes, styles, features, mounting options, price range and materials are available. The main disadvantage of many saddlebags is that they require specialized mounting supports to keep the bags from interfering with the wheels during operation.



### *Sissy Bar Bags*

Sissy bar bags mount high on the rear of the motorcycle and require a sissy bar, commonly found on Harley-Davidson and cruiser bikes, for secure attachment. Sissy bar bags are popular because they are easy to mount (if bike has a sissy bar), have a large storage capacity and are relatively inexpensive. However, sissy bar bags can raise the center of gravity considerably when heavier loads are carried.



### ***Tank Bags***

Sport bike and Adventure riders often utilise tank bags and these are a great alternative to saddlebags. Usually attached to the tank by magnets or web straps, and easily removed if the rider plans on being away from the bike - most tank bags have handles to make them easy to carry. The top of bike placement and multiple pockets make tank bags very convenient. Although they typically have less storage capacity than other bags, many are expandable and have side pockets for extra storage. Bikes with a plastic petrol tank will require a strap system to secure - check before buying.



### ***Audio / Map Pouches***

Audio and map pouches are small, lower cost, easily attached, special purpose versions of larger tank bags. Use for carrying maps under a clear cover, housing audio devices for easy rider interface or carrying small items like sunglasses, keys and money within easy reach.



### ***Hard Panniers and Top Cases***

Hard cases are often found on Touring and Adventure bikes where luggage can take a beating on long journeys. They provide increased security compared to leather as they are harder to penetrate (can't be slashed with a knife) and are often designed to remain on the bike most of the time. They also tend to be more tough and durable than leather and fabric bags.



### ***Trunk and Rack bags***

Trunk and rack bags mount on a rear luggage rack or on top of a hard trunk often found on larger touring bikes. Generally round or rectangular in shape and made of leather or leather like material or fabric, these bags usually provide a decent carrying capacity and mount and dismount easily.



### ***Handlebar Bags***

Originally associated with the image of a restless traveler, carrying all of his gear in a round bag strapped to the handlebars. Although this look popularised motorcycling, handlebar bags have fallen into relative disuse because of extra weight on the front wheel and difficulties with attachment. But still an iconic old time look.



### ***Tool Rolls***

Versatile tool rolls mount almost anywhere on a Harley-Davidson or cruiser styled bike. Typically constructed of leather or leather grained synthetics and generally round in shape, these small pouches can carry many of the smaller necessities where quick access is desired. Tool rolls come in a variety of styles and are often used as a styling touch.



### ***Helmet / Top Box***

Mounts to luggage rack behind the seat using a fixing plate, and provides a place to securely leave your helmet or store gear when away from the bike. Usually made from moulded hard plastic.



### ***Roll Bags***

Versatile round roll bags fit and look great almost anywhere on a motorcycle: rack, seat, sissy bar, handlebars or on top of another bag. They are basically large sized versions of conventional tool bags and are fairly inexpensive. Most roll bags come with straps for easy mounting and are available in leather or leather grained synthetics or fabric construction.



### ***Seat Bags***

Seat bags are relatively a new arrival and come in a variety of sizes and styles. Relatively easy to attach and remove, seat bags do not require a sissy bar or rack for mounting and can be used on almost any bike. Their main disadvantage is they are mounted on the pillion portion of the seat where a passenger would normally sit. Some seat bags are designed to provide the rider with back support.



### ***Windshield bags***

Bikes equipped with windshields provide an ideal mounting point for easy access storage of smaller items – keys, change, mobiles etc. One to three pocket designs, which attach to the fasteners securing the windshield to the fairing body.



### ***Saddlebag Top Storage Bags***

Top storage bags fit on top of hard side panniers and saddlebags to provide easy access for items like waterproofs, as well as overflow capacity for unplanned purchases made while traveling.



### ***Fender bags***

A fender bag mounts on the rear fender behind a solo seat. The stealth pillion pad styling looks great on custom bikes where luggage would look out of place. These bags carry a surprising amount of gear and mount with suction cups so no straps to detract visually.



### ***Highway Crash Bar Bags***

These specialised bags fit crash bars and provide convenient and easy access for smaller items.

Thanks to Saddlemen Bags and Luggage for the photos - see [www.saddlemen.com](http://www.saddlemen.com) for most of these options.