

THE *RIDE* PRODUCT TEST

BIG TAIL PACKS

Standard-sized tail pack just not big enough? One of these maxi tail packs could be the answer

By Jonathan Pearson

Photographs by Mark Manning

WE TESTED STANDARD tail packs in the June 2015 issue, when we found an impressively high standard and good variety of shapes and styles. But for some riders, a tail pack of 20 to 35 litres just isn't big enough, especially for longer trips.

There's a school of thought that even for the longest trip, you don't need hard luggage, with all the weight and bulk it adds. For a few nights away, riders who favour soft luggage could piece together a combination of tail pack, panniers, rucksack and tankbag, or they could go

for one of these larger tail packs.

Naturally some take up a lot of room, covering the rack and pillion seat, others less so. Some are waterproof, some need covers to remain dry. Some are sealed by zips, others use roll-top designs. Some fix to the bike, others have quick-release systems so you can take them with you easily when you stop. How do you find the right one for you? That's where this test comes in.

We're looking at tail packs that are designed to be secured to a bike in this test – not just any type of bag that can be held on with a pair of bungees.



GOING SOFT

A typical top box might hold around 45 litres and weigh several kilos. It'll need a mounting rack, and won't always be waterproof. A decent large tail pack can hold more, adds less bulk, and keeps its contents completely dry.

PRODUCT TEST BIG TAIL PACKS

Oxford Aqua 50 £59.99

www.oxprod.com

Claimed capacity 50L
Expandable N | **Rain cover** N
Waterproof inner N | **External pockets** 1 | **Shoulder strap** Y
Carry handle Y

> The middle sized of Oxford's Aqua packs is great value and arguably the most practical. It has enough capacity to be useful for a weekend away but not so big as to take over the back of the bike.

Completely waterproof, it sits tight on its strapping system, which is quick and easy to use. It's a no-nonsense solution low on any extra features, but it doesn't pretend to be otherwise.

The size of the additional Velcro strap makes mounting it on the rack

tricky, but the Velcro's a safety device - the strapping power comes from the straps. Like other softer bags on test it can be a minor fiddle

to try to load up lots of small items with the bag on the bike. It's easier to load the bag up indoors and then attach it to the bike.



Scores

Ease of fitting	4
Stability	5
Loading	4
Waterproofing	5
Total	18

THE RIDE VERDICT

WE COVERED A good number of miles testing these tail packs. They hold so much and we wanted to test them properly with differing amounts inside.

Almost all of them catch the wind when you ride at any speed. On our test bike, a Suzuki V-Strom 650, it was no great problem, nor did it present a handling issue any greater than you'd find by carrying a pillion. It is simply something you have to factor in to riding with these bags: the bigger the bag and the more you pack, the more the bike is affected.

We also discovered that packing off the bike then loading works for some and not others - and vice versa. It depends how large the bag is, what shape it is and whether it has a carry handle. You don't want to be packing your smalls outside in the rain, but equally you don't want to struggle to lift a heavy bag on to your bike.

The cuboid-shaped packs, such as BMW's Softbag and Bags Connection's Rackpack, proved very effective and practical in our test in terms of packing and loading. Both also have a quality feel about them, which is subjective to some degree but definitely worth noting. Although very simple in design, Oxford's Aqua packs also performed well because they are a no-nonsense, totally waterproof solution at a good price. **R**

NEXT MONTH...

£150 textile jackets reviewed and rated

Oxford Aqua 70 £69.99

www.oxprod.com

Claimed capacity 70L | **Expandable** N | **Rain cover** N | **Waterproof inner** N | **External pockets** 3 | **Shoulder strap** Y | **Carry handle** Y

> As with other Oxford Aqua packs the 70 is basic but effective. Large and completely waterproof, it has acres of volume to pack any variety of oddly sized or shaped items.

The strapping system worked on both pillion seat and rack on our test bike. A Velcro strap fits under the seat more easily than the rack, but in either place the straps pull it tight.

Unless packed to capacity the Aqua 70 flops about slightly at any speed, though not in a dramatic way.

Scores

Ease of fitting	4
Stability	4
Loading	4
Waterproofing	5
Total	17

