



SHAD ZULUPACK SOFT LUGGAGE

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Price: \$74-\$169

Contact: shadusa.com

VERDICT ★★★★★

Industrial looks reflect indestructible construction, though the saddlebags could benefit from a few key refinements—like internal compression straps.

Forget for a moment that the first person who saw SHAD's Zulupack luggage on my motorcycle suggested that it had all the visual appeal of an old tire—adventure riding isn't supposed to be sexy. Inner-tube aesthetics aside, the comparison is completely appropriate, since the Zulupack gear offers rugged durability similar to the average radial tire. This stuff seems indestructible.

Made from 420-denier nylon coated with waterproof PVC on both sides, constructed using seamless welding technology, and featuring watertight zippers, these bags are waterproof and claim to be highly tear- and abrasion-resistant as well. They look and feel like something you might pack for Armageddon. And, with flexible shapes and integrated backpack straps and other carrying accommodations on most models, the Zulupack line is highly versatile too.

Available in sizes ranging from a 5-liter waist pack to a cavernous 138-liter travel bag, SHAD offers options for any adventure. We sampled three pieces: a 38-liter duffel, a 55-liter tail pack/backpack, and the 42-liter Thunder saddlebags. The duffel (\$74) was a fast favorite for its simple functionality. A basic roll-top duffel that's perfect for swallowing a few days' worth of clothes or a tent and sleeping bag, the duffel uses simple wraparound straps that makes it easy to lash to any rack or passenger seat, and integrated backpack straps make it a breeze to transport off the bike.

If you want something with more structure, the 55-liter tail bag (\$169) consists of a zippered 45-liter main compartment with a 10-liter "attic" that lets you separate loads and features internal compression straps to keep everything in place. Unlike the smaller duffel that uses separate mounting straps, the larger tail pack uses a quartet of quick and convenient integrated side belts with alloy hooks that both secure and compress the load so everything stays put, even over rough terrain. Like the duffel, built-in backpack straps and an EVA foam back pad make this bag easy to carry off the bike—or in a canoe or even for hiking too. This is an exceptional piece of kit.

The 42-liter Thunder saddlebag set (\$165)—each bag with a rigid plastic internal stiffener to hold its shape and each large enough to swallow an XL-size helmet—mounts simply with twin, adjustable Velcro straps that drape over the seat and anchor lines that secure each of the lower corners and utilizes a roll-top closure like the duffel. Open construction accommodates a variety of loads, though without any inner straps or compression system, it can be hard to secure smaller items. And although the saddlebags stayed put perfectly on my BMW R1200GS equipped with a Tourtech pannier rack, the fit might be fussier on sportbikes or other bikes with smaller tails, especially since the shortest length of the adjustable anchor straps is about 7 inches. Some users might have to improvise shorter straps.

