Shad SH50 Topcase

While the Kawasaki Concours 14 has an ample luggage rack perfect for a soft tail pack, additional waterproof storage is never a bad idea. With several two-up trips looming, we called our friends at Shad, who quickly provided a solution. The SH50 topcase was a perfect color match to our Concours 14. The mounting kit base plate (sold separately) was easy to install, requiring only basic tools. Once affixed, the fit was tight and secure. Even after several thousand miles and some admittedly heavy loads, the case remained firmly in place. At 50 liters, the topcase easily swallows two full-face helmets.

master cylinder connected to a pair of big 310mm petal rotors, grabbed by radial-mounted four-piston calipers. Separate pads for each piston improve stopping performance. Out back, a single 270mm petal disc is clamped by a two-piston opposed caliper.

Braking is powerful, fade-free and easy to modulate. Our test bike had the optional ABS, which is not linked front-to-rear. A few times, under heavy braking, it felt like the ABS on the rear wheel intervened too soon, but it's quite possible that the pavement offered less grip than it appeared to have. Otherwise the ABS system performed flawlessly and didn't feel like it was there – which is a good thing.

With that much capacity under lock and key, an extra couple of days on the road is no problem at all. Opening and closing the Shad is a breeze and removal of the case from the mounting plate is also a simple, one-button affair. The SH50 looks great, works flawlessly, and doesn't require an engineering degree to install. What more could you ask for?

Shad SH50 Topcase

Colors: standard black, numerous color options
Price: black $314, colors $369
Passenger Backrest: $38
Mounting Kit: $58.70
www.shadusa.com

Ergonomics

The Concours 14's riding position is far more relaxed than the ZX-14's, with tall handlebars reaching almost 4 inches further back and 6 inches higher. Seat height is raised 1/2 inch and the footpegs are about an inch lower and forward. The roomy saddle accommodates both rider and passenger well, and the overall ergonomics make the Connie comfortable for all-day rides. Adjustable brake and clutch levers help fit most riders' hands, and the low-mounted mirrors give a good view of the tops of the saddlebags.

In addition to the large analog speedometer and tach, the LCD digital dash includes an odometer, twin trip meters, a gas gauge, a gear-position indicator, and a clock. The display also shows instant and average fuel economy, calculated cruising range, tire-pressure, and gear position. The only problem we had with the bike was intermittent pressure readings.

Kawasaki claims 36 mpg, but we typically saw 35.4 mpg (via the onboard readout) and down to 31.6 mpg, based on actual miles and gallons pumped. With 5.8 gallons onboard, you can easily go 150 miles or more on a tank.

A welcome feature is the electrically adjustable windscreen. At low speeds, it's nice to have the screen all the way down, for cooling airflow in hot weather. With the windscreen fully up, more wind is blocked, but there's also more helmet buffeting, and the low pressure formed behind it pushes the rider forward. An optional taller windscreen is available, but we haven't had a chance to try it yet.

All Concours come standard with color-matched hard saddlebags that are easy to use, and each can hold a full-face helmet. Another handy item is the glove box mounted on the gas tank. A power outlet in the dash can be used to run a GPS, but we'd also like to see heated grips, a compact audio and communication system, and cruise control offered.

KI-PASS Locking System

A major feature is the unique Kawasaki Intelligent Proximity Activation Start System (KI-PASS), which comes with two electronic key fob transponders that are recognized by the bike's locking system. Carry one in your pocket, and if the uniquely coded KI-PASS fob is within about five feet, the ignition switch will unlock, allowing you to push and then turn the ignition key