

An Over-the-Top Top Case

Review and photos by Ron Davis
#111820

SINCE 2005, THE NUMBERS OF TESTI-monials for Caribou Motorcycle Luggage from ADV riders has mounted as steadily as waypoints from Waco to Whitehorse. The riders' "been-through-hell" accounts describe everything from drops to vehicle strikes to cliff side run-offs, all reporting little or no damage to their luggage or its contents (though the bikes often didn't fare as well). One of the keys to Caribou's success story is the company's choice to feature luggage made by Pelican Cases in their side and top case kits. I hate to use the moto writer's fallback phrase "bullet-proof," but if you're unfamiliar with American-made Pelican Cases, Google "Pelican Torture Test" sometime. You'll see their cases have survived being driven over, thrown from three-story rooftops, submerged in the ocean, set on fire and, yes, blasted with a 12-gauge shotgun.

So when I started looking for a tough, secure top case to haul my camera, laptop and other sensitive goodies, a Pelican case in a kit from Caribou seemed like the logical choice. I chose to go with their 25-liter top case, which is big enough to hold a decent riding jacket or a good-sized courier bag. However, Caribou does offer a 35-liter Pelican case for bigger loads and a B&W 34-liter model that will hold a full-face helmet. The 25-liter case only comes in black, though. Other side and top cases can be ordered in colors like tan, green, gray, yellow and orange. Orange? Huh.

Caribou has top and side case kits for late model bikes from BMW, Suzuki, KTM, Yamaha, Kawasaki and more, but since I ride an aging R1150R, some e-mail action had to happen in order to make up a mounting system that would work. Fortunately, Roger Pioszak, the founder and president of Caribou Motorcycle Luggage



Before: My R1150R had the OEM tail rack. I removed its center panel and use the brackets as a base for the Caribou Case mounting plate. 2) Removing four Allen head bolts frees the tail rack's center panel. 3) Before installing Caribou's mounting plate, I bridged the brackets with a sheet of steel, just to add a little rigidity. Scout approved. 4) The mounting plate was easy to install since the Caribou Top Case comes with all the necessary hardware, including bolts, Nylock nuts, spacers and washers. 5) The case itself is anchored to the mounting plate with nifty ¼-turn fasteners. Total elapsed on/off time: 10 seconds. 6) After: Note the weather-resistant key lock, the heavy-duty latches and stainless "padlock protectors."



Scout's version of a torture test is nothing compared to what Caribou/Pelican cases have been subjected to. Driven over, thrown off buildings, dunked in the ocean and shot at – these cases are tough!

and a GS rider himself, is known for being pretty much obsessive when it comes to setting up custom solutions. Caribou prides itself on sending out turnkey kits – no trips to the hardware store for that certain quarter-inch bolt.

My bike already had the OEM BMW tail rack, so with a little customizing (see photo panel), we came up with solid platform for the kit's powder coated mounting plate. Once I was able to fight back my usual tendency to put things together backwards, I found installation of the mounting plate and case a breeze with a few simple tools. The universal mounting plate comes with a variety of anchor holes, but I needed to drill a few new ones – an easy task since the plate is made of aluminum. Once you have a Caribou mounting plate bolted on, the case can be quickly mounted or removed using the ingenious, waterproof "Caribou Quick Fasten System" (QFS est. on/off 10 seconds). Besides retrofitting the QFS, Caribou also installs a weather resistant, NEMA 4-rated



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- Day 6 Chamonix - Briancon
- Day 7 Briancon
- Day 8 Briancon - Aosta
- Day 9 Aosta - Lugano
- Day 10 Lugano - Livigno
- Day 11 Livigno - Bolzano
- Day 12 Bolzano
- Day 13 Bolzano - Kaprun
- Day 14 Kaprun - Seefeld
- Day 15 Departure from Innsbruck/Seefeld



TOTAL DISTANCE: 1200 - 2000 miles (2000 - 3250 km). Daily rides 100 - 180 miles (170 - 300 km). The entire route runs on good asphalt roads.
ACCOMMODATIONS: Comfortable middle-class hotels with Alpine flair.
REST DAYS: Andermatt, Briancon, Bolzano

HIGHLIGHTS: 6 countries, Andermatt, Swiss Alps, Chamonix, Mont Blanc, Briancon with the famous passes of the tour de France, Lago Maggiore, Bolzano, Dolomites, Passo di Stelvio

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key lock in its cases; no padlocks needed, though there are two stainless steel-reinforced “padlock protectors” in case you want to hang on some extra hardware.

The Pelican case at the heart of the kit is made of what seems to be incredibly tough, ultra high-impact copolymer resin. No denting, no crushing and there’s little chance I’ll ever need that lifetime guarantee. The case hinges, carrying handle and lock are heavy duty, and all Pelican cases from Caribou feature a watertight O-ring lid seal and a special “atmospheric purge valve.” I also appreciate the detent in the case hinge, which holds the top up while you’re rummaging for that map of northern Michigan you just know you put in there. Caribou customers may want to opt for

some “Pick-N-Pluck Foam,” which is offered for all its top cases and allows the purchaser to make snug nests for sensitive equipment. Other top case accessories that can be ordered from the Caribou site include backrest pads, tie downs and lid organizers.

I’m strictly a street rider, so possibly choosing a case from the company whose motto is “World’s Toughest Motorcycle Luggage” may have been a bit of overkill. But the peace of mind provided by a secure, nearly indestructible case with the solid, custom-fit mount is worth it to me.

Caribou Motorcycle Luggage’s 25-Liter Rear Top Case System sells for \$305 plus \$15 shipping. More information, testimonials and videos are available at www.cariboucases.com, where you can also order any of their products. You can also get quick answers and order products over the phone at 303-786-8947. ©



Ready to roll! Caribou bills itself as the “World’s Toughest Motorcycle Luggage” and backs all their side and top case systems with a lifetime guarantee.



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