

Pack Rat

BY TRICIA SZULEWSKI

Has this happened to you? Your wife calls you at work and asks you to pick up some diapers and a fifth of Jack Daniel's on your way home. Now, you can't very well say that you rode to work, therefore can't fulfill her request. That would surely go on the mental list she's been keeping of reasons why you need to sell your motorcycle. You'd better find a way to strap such necessities to the bike.

In a pinch, a cargo net and a box of bungees can help you get through a sticky situation like this. But the well-prepared traveler just needs a few modifications to a stock cruiser to make it a real hauler. We used our old friend Ed's Honda VLX to demon-

strate. He already had an old set of Willie & Max saddlebags strapped to the bike, but we decided to upgrade with a newer set of large bags from the company's Gray Thunder series. While we're at it, we thought we'd toss in a tour trunk and a tool pouch from the same series.

Now, in order to accommodate all the new baggage, we took a look at Cobra's offerings for the bike. Since the new larger saddlebags would need support to keep them from falling into the wheel well, Cobra's saddlebag support brackets were first on our shopping list. Next, a sissybar and luggage rack would support the tour trunk nicely while allowing the back seat to act as yet another place to mount extra stuff.

Installing the new items took almost no time at all, and only two tools from Ed's toolkit. The new tool pouch mounts to the front fork, so check to make sure that your bike has enough clearance. Check that the amount of front suspension travel equals the amount of space between the bag and the fender. Double-check that the saddlebags don't come into contact with the exhaust pipes. If they do, go back and retie the two yokes closer together. And remember to always load your bike with the bulk of the weight as far forward and as low as you can for the best stability and handling.



1

You know that Cobra's been in this business a long time when you install it's parts with no problems at all.



2

Remove the seat. Then remove both 12mm fender strut bolts.



3

Feed the new bolt into the rear saddlebag support, sissybar bracket, and larger washer.



4

Put a dab of blue Loctite on the bolt, and secure it to the fender strut. Repeat using the smaller washer in the front.



5

Next, fit the luggage rack between the support bracket and sissybar, and feed two of the supplied bolts through the bottom holes. Do not tighten.



6

Pivot the sissybar until the top holes are aligned, and tighten all the bolts.



7

The saddlebags lace together. Find the right height, making sure they don't touch the exhaust pipes. Reinstall the seat over the yokes.

hard data

Gray Thunder Series
 Large Slant Saddlebag Set, \$177.75
 Max Pax Tour Trunk, \$113
 Tool Pouch, \$47.50
www.WillieAndMax.com

COBRA ENGINEERING INC.
 Standard Sissybar, \$254.95
 Sissybar Luggage Rack, \$139.95
 Saddlebag Supports, \$79.95
 714/692-8180
www.CobraUSA.com

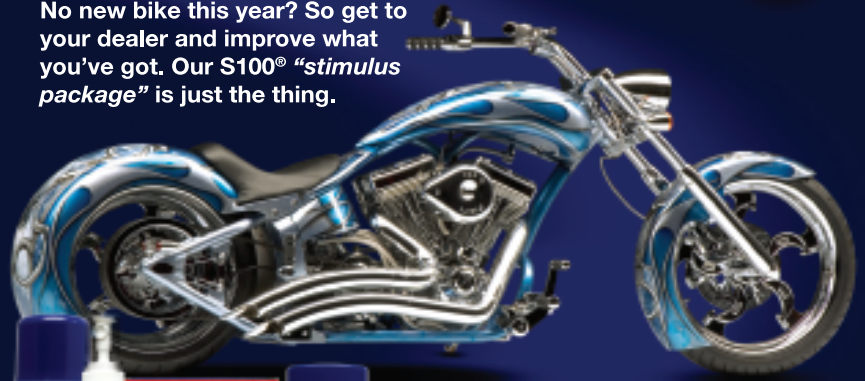


8

Mount the tool pouch under the headlight with the supplied Velcro straps. The tour trunk sits on the luggage rack and uses a thick Velcro tab as well. We added some bungees for extra security. **RB**

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