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LevelingUp
Featuring: Dr. Tray
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Adios, Hold Up. The quest for finding a better bike rack has finally ended with the introduction of Yakima’s Dr. Tray.

At $579, the most noticeable difference between Dr. Tray and the Hold Up is the price. Dr. Tray is a $150 premium over the Hold Up, but the former is a premium product and superior in almost every way. The rear hatch can be taken open by tilting the rack, the SpeedKnob removes the wobble out of the rack when driving, and the RemoteControl tilt lever is user-friendly. Finally, at 38 lbs, Dr. Tray is considerably lighter than its elder brother, the 50 lb Hold Up.

Yakima Bike Racks

While I’ve always been a Yakima aficionado, my history with their bike racks is long and varied. Starting with the Universal Forklift that screwed my 2000 Volkswagen Jetta during my graduate school years, to the DoubleDown 4, and more recently, the Hold Up, I’ve known my fair share of the variety of bike racks Yakima has to offer.

For me, switching out bike racks every few years has always been about necessity, not one-upmanship. The larger my bike stable expanded and my circle of cycling friends grew, the further I traveled for adventure, and the more particular I became about finding a rack that would suit all of my new needs. Consequently, I embraced the tray life several years ago.

User-Friendly Assembly

Dr. Tray arrived with easy to follow assembly instructions and visual representations. Each step was clearly described and I did not take me all afternoon to put it together as I had anticipated. (KEDA can take a leaf out of Yakima’s book.) In fact, the total assembly time was around 30 minutes. A more competent person could probably get it done in 15.

After the main piece was installed into a 2” hitch receiver, Dr. Tray revealed not one, but two pleasant surprises: the SpeedKnob and the RemoteControl tilt lever.

The cam mechanism (called the SpeedKnob) by Yakima ensures the rack is secured tightly and eliminates wobbling into the hitch receiver. After installing a safety retaining pin and turning the SpeedKnob clockwise for a few turns, the rack is securely mounted into the hitch receiver. This is a feature that I’ve long admired in most racks.

Secondly, Dr. Tray includes a RemoteControl tilt lever to lower the rack. This is a much improved design than the spring pin used in the Hold Up. The latter of which required two people to lower the rack if it was loaded with bikes. A firm squeeze of the Dr. Tray RemoteControl tilt lever, and I was able to initiate the main arm parallel with the ground to start installing trays.

JAM COLLECTIVE
It's Tray Time!

To install the trays, you flip up the two adjustable friction levers and slide the first tray into place. While it is a bit of a snafu, the tray easily slides into place.

Position the tray between the two marks indicated maximum range, pull the levers down to lock it into place, and then install the second tray. Rear wheel trays were installed by aligning the mounting holes and sliding in the retaining pin, pushing the snap ring into place, and velcro. The tray is secured to the rack.

Admittedly, the most frustrating part about the installation process was snapping the snap ring into place. I just couldn’t do it. I had at the end for a snap ring were absent, and I don’t own a snap ring tool. So, armed with my friend’s needle nose pliers, I was eventually able to seat it.

Loading bikes onto Dr. Tray could not be simpler. Engage the Remote Control Kit lever, lower the trays to a horizontal position, and extend the swing arms. Like the Hold Up, after lifting the bike into place, snugly clamp the front tire with the swing arm and fasten the rear wheel strap securely.

From an aesthetic perspective, Yakima would do well to use less plastic. The Universal Forklift I owned had taken a beating from the sun and faded considerably, thus affecting its resale value. A friend of mine had suggested wiping a UV inhibitor a few times a year on the plastic to prevent racks from looking prematurely aged.

When fully loaded, Dr. Tray extends nearly four feet from the bumper. To increase visibility, perhaps Yakima will consider selling auxiliary tail lights or reflective tape especially for their tray racks.

Finally, it would be nice if Yakima racks upgraded to heavier locks to deter bike theft. As someone whose friends have had bikes stolen from the bike racks of their vehicles in broad daylight, I pay special attention to this feature.

Versatility

With the exception of a large tandem or a recumbent, Dr. Tray will hold any combination of wheelsets in your stable, including road bikes and fat bikes. I was also pleased to see plenty of clearance for disc brakes on my Surly Straggler. Its bump absorbing oversized trays are also ideal for carrying fat bikes.

For big weekend expeditions, the $250 EZ+1 extension can be added, and Dr. Tray can accommodate up to three bikes. A family or group of four would probably prefer to continue using the Hold Up and its ability to hold up four bikes. Dr. Tray is available in both 2" and 1.25" models to fit standard hitch receivers.

Dr. Tray is a great choice for someone who owns a variety of bikes and participates in different recreational cycling events. With its lighter weight and user-friendly assembly, expect to see Dr. Trays dominating the trail head parking lots in the future.