



Vital MTB

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Featuring: Dr.Tray

Monthly Traffic: 1,650,000

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/VitalMTB-Yakima-100117>

Testing the Ultra-Convenient Yakima Dr.Tray Hitch Rack
Claimed to be the lightest in its class, this rack is super adjustable to help keep your bikes from getting scratched.
Rating: ★★★★★ [Vital MTB](#)



There is no shortage of options when it comes to hauling your precious rig to the trail: roof racks, cheap, strap-on trunk racks, hitch racks, and even those wild suction-cup racks. Each style of rack has its own advantage, whether it be ease of securing your bike, staying out of the way of your trunk/tailgate/hatch, or simply meeting your budget. Hitch racks are a common option. They are often secure and convenient, don't destroy your gas mileage as much as a roof rack, you don't run the risk of forgetting your bike is on the roof when pulling into the garage or low overhang, and in general, they're easier to load and unload than a roof or trunk rack.

Yakima has been one of the major players in the rack game for quite a long time. Recently they released a new tray-style hitch rack dubbed Dr.Tray (Get it? Dr. Dre...). The Dr.Tray rack aims to solve many common issues with racks: It's easy to move around at just 34-pounds (15.4kg) for the 2-inch receiver version; it features easily movable trays to prevent bar-on-seatpost, bar-on-saddle, or bar-on-bar interference; it's also designed to make it simple to access the trunk or hatch of your vehicle. Curious to see if the Dr.Tray rack would pull through on its promises and last for the long haul, we've been road tripping and back-road rallying with it for the better part of the past year.

Initial Impressions

Assembling the tray is straightforward and made even easier thanks to [Yakima's install video](#).

Despite its burly appearance, the Dr.Tray rack is quite light. It was notably lighter than the comparable 1.25-inch, two-tray Thule T2 rack it replaced. Thanks to the low weight, the struggle to line up the hitch rack with the receiver during installation was made quite a bit easier. Once the rack is in position, a retaining clip snaps into the receiver/rack interface. The rack is then secured using Yakima's SpeedKnob, which requires no tools to tighten the wedge that holds the rack in place. The SpeedKnob system includes a lock and key which disables the use of the knob in an effort to prevent a thief from nabbing the rack.

Provided the bikes are securely held and the rack is easy to use, the bulky looks are a minor aesthetic trade-off we're willing to accept.

While raising and lowering the rack the first few times, we noted how it took quite a bit of effort to squeeze the RemoteControl tilt lever. Time would tell if this could improve.

On The Hitch

As most of you can attest, loading multiple bikes on a single rack can be a pain when unwanted contact between the bikes occurs. This often leads to brake levers wearing holes in saddles, nasty scratches in fork legs from wide dropouts, and many other unfortunate injuries to your two-wheel friends. One of this rack's standout features is on-the-fly adjustable spacing between bikes. This is made possible by the [grey-colored QuickChange levers](#) that allow you to easily slide the racks fore and aft or side to side.

Yakima Dr.Tray Rack

Bikes can be loaded reasonably quickly and are secured well using the over-the-front-wheel arms and rear wheel straps that snap into place. Do the bikes stay completely still? No, but they stayed put enough to allow us to rally up our favorite backcountry shuttle roads at a reasonable clip without worry about the bikes getting ejected. Because we were able to space the bikes out using Yakima's QuickChange levers, we've experienced no frame or fork damage due to contact with either the rack itself or other bikes. Even in areas where the rack arm can wear at the fork arch on similar designs, the Dr.Tray rack didn't have an issue.

Those looking to add a third bike will be pleased to know that the EZ+1 tray is slightly elevated, again to prevent contact issues. Adding the extra tray means the bikes get closer together, but the total length of the rack does not change. Because of this, those with three bikes will likely use the QuickChange levers to adjust the trays more often.

Another standout feature of the Dr.Tray rack is the integrated SKS cable lock system. While we wouldn't leave our bikes unattended for long using just these locks, it's nice to be able to transport your bikes with a sturdy and secure cable system for quick gas station run-ins and the like. The cables are long enough to go through both the frame and a wheel, and when not in use, the cables slide nicely out of sight and into the trays.

Long Term Durability

We've seen many racks fail over time, whether it be something minor like the padding over the securing arm to a catastrophic failure causing the untimely demise of cherished bikes. Following around 5,000 miles with the Dr.Tray rack installed, often with two downhill bikes, so far we're impressed. There is no premature wear to the arm padding, the rack itself still feels structurally stable, all nuts and bolts have remained snug, and the often-used QuickChange levers continue to hold the trays in place as securely as day one.

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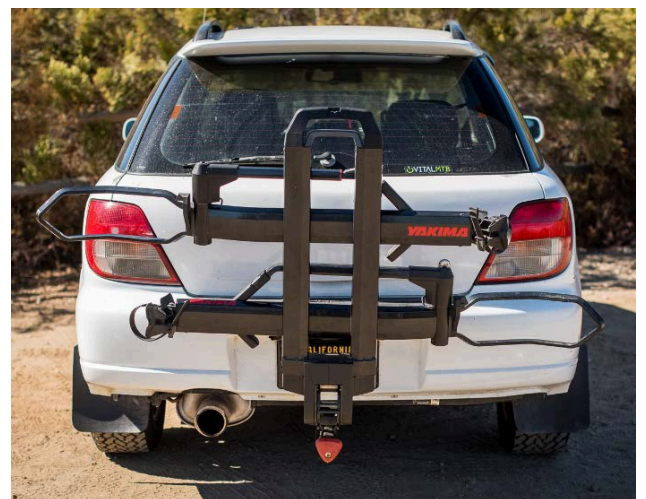
What's The Bottom Line?

High-end racks will always be an investment, but if the rack does its job by keeping your bikes secure and damage-free for years to come, it's money well spent. At \$579 USD there are definitely more affordable racks than Yakima's Dr.Tray, but it has performed well, prevented more dinged up forks, doesn't bounce wildly on bumpy roads, and (most importantly) it has an [integrated bottle opener](#) for post-ride refreshments. Aside from covering these bases, we were impressed by the level of adjustability and ease of use provided by the Dr.Tray rack and feel that's what sets it apart from the competition.

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