

The Ultimate Hauler

Dirt Rider Shows How To Get Your Bikes There In Style

Photos by Drew Ruiz

We all have to get our machines to where we ride somehow or another. You've seen some of the ridiculous methods our readers have shown us right here in the magazine. But *Dirt Rider* editors haul bikes for a living, and with over 100 years of combined riding experience, we know how to do it. So we pooled our expertise in truck bed loading and outfitted various types of vehicles to give you some ideas on setting up your own rig. And if you like this, we'll do it with trailers and vans in the future.





Full-Sized Travel Truck

By Jimmy Lewis

I outgrew my mini-truck in 1997 and I haven't looked back. I learned the advantage of having space behind the seat with my old Nissan King Cab, and now I'm spoiled by the luxury of a full-sized truck with a bed wide enough for three bikes to fit easily—I can even do four in a pinch. I don't go for the long bed, either, as I'm also addicted to four-wheel-drive, going places others can't and the advantages of a shorter wheelbase keeping me out of trouble. So here is a look at my setup:

I started with a luxury by having a Line-X Xtra spray-in bed liner applied. The truck's previous owner had a plastic bed liner in place, and it was slippery, warped and had allowed some dents underneath, especially along the front near the cab. Line-X was able to straighten the front and fill in the imperfections of the bed as well as color-match (the Xtra part) the coating so it perfectly matched the truck's stock color. It gets a lot of compliments, has proven tough and isn't slippery like the wet plastic was.

The necessity list begins with a Bed X-Tender from AMP Research. That effectively gives me a long bed when I need it, then disappears into the back of the bed when I don't. It also makes a nice sectioned-off area to keep stuff from rolling around with the tailgate closed. The extender pulls double duty at the track or trailhead serving as a bench, a toolbox holder or even a leg rest. AMP also makes another truck goodie that I was not aware of how much I needed it until I tried it. The BedStep is a fold-down step that retracts tight up against the bumper. You can't even tell it's there until you simply step on it and its well-engineered pivots swing and lock the step into position so you can easily get into the back left side of the bed. With trucks getting ever taller, this was a welcome addition.

Another necessity, requirement almost, is a bike rack across the front of the bed. CCR Sport makes a burly unit that goes along the front of the bed and prevents the bikes from pushing the thin steel bed wall into the cab of the truck when motorcycles are tied down. It also gives the wheels a place to locate, and CCR adds a modular middle extension that spaces the center bike back so the handlebars stay clear of each other. Tiedown hooks are located in the perfect positions, but we learned to use the stronger side truck-bed-mounted hooks, since the force from three tightly secured bikes is too much tension for the thin steel

at the front of the bed to which the bar is mounted. I chose Cycra's new tiedowns with carabineer lowers and soft-tie tops on the thicker-width and colorful nylon straps. Completing the bike hauling setup, a lightweight Moose Racing folding ramp is easy to stow under the loaded bikes and gear, leaving room to spare. I've come to like the TruckShade over the past few years, so I set up my new Dodge with another one. This awning's mounts, simple wood blocks, slide into the existing holes atop the bed rail. It sets up in just a few minutes, takes abuse from winds up to 30 mph and provides enough shade for two dudes, provided you park facing the right direction. It stores into a double-length paper towel-sized tube and weighs nothing.

Finally, the crowning jewel I've found for my truck—a company called Adventure Trailers sells a product called the Eezi-Awn Rooftent. It is a truck accessory I've wanted to set up on my rig for a while, and this article was the perfect excuse. Although it's expensive, I did a lot of research to see which ones were durable enough to take the abuse I know I'll give it. Mounted to the roof via a conventional Thule rack system, it weighs about 120 pounds. But the trickiest part is how simple it is to uncover and open up into a ready-to-sleep-in tent. Off the ground and out of the elements, it also provides additional shade. In less than four minutes, and without needing to unload the back of the truck, you can be ready to throw down your sleeping bag on the comfortable mattress contained inside the tent. It is incredibly weatherproof and has two doors and two windows, both covered with canvas and screen mesh closures as well as pop-up shades. The whole unit is constructed from military-spec canvas and rubber materials over a wood and aluminum frame. The 1400's closed footprint of 48 inches in length by 54 inches in width by 11 inches in height (an open measurement of 96 inches by 54 inches by 51 inches) is easily roomy enough for two adults. The Rooftent is so much better than sleeping on the ground and a deal-maker if you arrive late and don't want to unload the bikes. Plus, it closes almost as easily as it opens by using an internal bungee system. Wind noise while driving is minimal, and I haven't noticed a significant decrease in fuel mileage since installing the tent. Now I have a bike hauler and a camper all in one, and a good one at that.



One large truck with the works! It's amazing how quickly luxuries feel like necessities once you spoil yourself.



PARTS

AMP Bed X-Tender: \$250
AMP BedStep: \$258
Cycra tiedowns: \$34.95 per set
Eezi-Awn Rooftop Tent: \$1750
Moose folding ramp: \$85.95
CCR Sport bed bar: \$139.95
TruckShade: \$79.97
Line-X Xtra spray-on bed liner: Starts at \$450



How To Load A Truck

Here are nine tips to keep you off of "America's Funniest Home Videos."

- Make sure your loading ramp is secure, not slippery and not at too steep of an angle.
- If the step into the truck is tall, use your motorcycle stand as a step.
- Have the tiedowns out of the way and ready to go before you load the bike.
- When the bike is going up the ramp and the opposite side of the handlebar becomes too far of a reach, let go of it and swing that hand back to the rear wheel. Push on the rear wheel (like you are turning it) to keep the bike going in the truck, steer the bar with your other hand as you walk along the side of the truck guiding the bike into position. Keep the bike in balance the whole time.
- Hook the tiedowns to the handlebar without pinching wires or scratching or gouging the bar and use the most secure hooks to attach tiedowns to your truck. Tiedowns with soft tie attachments and carabineer lower hooks make this easy.
- Often, placing the motorcycle's front wheel in the front corner of the bed will secure it from slipping better than if it were just placed straight in. This also frees up handlebar room for a third bike in the middle of the truck and some additional room at the tailgate as the bike is shorter tip to tip.
- The angle of the bike can play a large role in how secure it is. Test it by pushing on it, side-to-side and back-and-forth to see if the tightening method needs rethinking. Ninety percent of the time, two tiedowns are enough.
- Only hauling one bike? Load it directly behind you or off-center to the left; this leaves the right-rear blind spot bike-free and your lane changes will be much safer.
- Unless you're a highly talented freak of nature or just plain stupid, don't ride your bike into the back of your truck. Especially if someone is videotaping you.

Want some "Ultimate" on trailers and vans? Send to DRMail@src.com to tell us about this or anything else you want to see more of in your magazine.

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Ultimate Truck? Ultimate Trar!
By Jesse Ziegler

Ultimate Saver
By Pete Peterson

PARTS	
Ready Ramp compact truck ramp:	\$269.95
Protecta heavy-duty rubber bed mat:	\$80.99
High Roller tie bar:	\$94.95
High Roller cam-lock tiedowns:	\$26.95 per set

I drive a "trar." A truck-car. The Honda Ridgeline is just that. And since I bought it almost two years ago, I couldn't be happier with how it works as a moto workhorse. As a base for the Ultimate Trar, it's damn near perfect for every bike hauling chore I can give it—and I give it a lot with 30,000 miles of moto driving a year. It works great on the SoCal freeways and can go in the mountains just fine. Plus, it has a huge trunk where my toolbox, ramp, air compressor, extra boots, tubes and miscellaneous junk lives, and it has a sturdy front bed with bike wheel locators standard and the beefiest cargo hooks I've ever seen. So, when I thought about what I could do to improve the trar experience, my brain didn't get too far before it got to AMP Research and ProTaper. I bolted on the AMP Research Bed X-Tender and clipped in some of the new ultra-cool tiedowns from ProTaper. The Bed X-Tender is easy to install and works (meaning it keeps my stuff in my trar) as flawlessly as the one I had in my old truck. It's one of those truck parts every person who rides can benefit from. The ProTaper tiedowns are quite ingenious for tiedowns; they have a ball bearing swivel carabineer to keep the strap straight and secured in the truck, soft hook loops to protect handlebar finishes and a cool hook-and-loop strap that keeps the loose end of the cinch-strap from flapping in the wind as you rock-and-roll down the road. Now, I don't have to unhook my loose strap from my kickstarter before I unload. That's it: the Ultimate Trar.



You can't tell from this photo, but Jesse Ziegler has junk in the trunk. Even the well-thought-out Ridgeline can benefit from a few moto goodies.



PARTS	
Motorcycle bed extender, available through Honda car dealers:	\$356
ProTaper tiedowns:	\$34.95 per set

I take the low (cost) road with a basic Toyota pickup. Gas prices don't dictate if I can ride with my little four-cylinder sipping gas down the highway. The bed is fine for one bike, tight with two and gear, and begins to look like something out of a Three Stooges episode with three, but I've done it. *Whoop, whoop, whoop!* To gain a ton of needed room I strap a Ready Ramp bed extender to the back after I use it as a loading ramp. I love this thing. The ramp is long enough that it would work great on even a lifted truck, then two quick folds and four straps later and I gain a foot of bed space. Some of the connectors are a little iffy, so I'm going to experiment with carabineers there, but the ramp/bed extender is exactly what I wanted. When not hauling bikes it lives in my sideyard, so my truck bed stays "stock" looking. Jimmy suggested I go with a bed mat rather than a bed liner, and so far I really like it. It's grippy so my stuff doesn't slide around, it looks clean and it protects the bed without secretly destroying it under a kiddie-pool-shaped piece of plastic. I bolted a High Roller Bed Bar across the front to keep my bed from bending and my bikes from slipping. The bar has a simple but clean look (and price), and I grabbed a few High Roller tiedowns in oddball colors, so no one would steal them. Stealing tiedowns is sort of a pastime here. (Hey, Jesse, guess where I'm going to get my ramp/bed extender carabineers?) You don't need big bucks to have big fun. I go no-frills on my way to big thrills with no spills (that's no crashes and no food in my truck!).

Contact List	
www.adventuretrailers.com	
www.amp-research.com	
www.ccrsport.com	
www.cycra.com	
www.highrollerproducts.com	
www.linex.com	
www.mooseracing.com	
www.protaper.com	
www.readyramp.com	
www.truckshade.com	



Small truck. Small caption. Hey, no respect!