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Jesse Luggage Systems: Odyssey II Panniers

by Bret Tkacs

Sometimes the best kit upgrades begin with a story, and my switch to *Jesse Luggage Systems (Jesse Bags)* is no exception. As I was happily cruising along an incredibly twisty highway, I stopped for a quick victory photo only to discover that somewhere along the steep cliffs above a fast flowing river my OEM *BMW* aluminum pannier had jettisoned, never to be found again.

Jesse Luggage Systems is a small company based just north of Phoenix, AZ, and only a day's ride from where I was. So I called to see if they had anything in stock that would fit my steed. They were extremely helpful and sympathetic to my predicament and put aside a set of panniers. Adding to that, the receptionist stayed late to wait for my arrival, while the shop techs pre-assembled some of the mounting hardware to help out.

Installation

The install was speedy and everything bolted up cleanly and effortlessly. It was so simple that I didn't need to look at the directions (typical guy) until mounting was

completed, but only to ensure there were no mistakes. The racks look clean with the bags off and hug the bodywork. It only takes minutes to pull the racks off if you want to run soft luggage without them, or just want a "rack-free" bike for commuting. (*Jesse* is about to release a soft bag option that is compatible with its rack system, too—sweet!)

Al Jesse stopped by to check on my progress and make sure everything was working out okay. He gave me a hand finishing up and even tuned the bike's quick-mount system for me. After the install he gave me a personal tour of the shop and their product development department. All I can say is WOW! They have some really neat stuff in the works that we'll tell you about in the near future.

Features and Function

Jesse Bags are designed for single-handed operation for getting them on and off. Other innovative features include:

- The locking mechanism is a single handle spin lock that can be locked on or loosened with one hand.
- The security locks double as handles for carrying the bags when off the bike.
- There's a spring-loaded retaining rack in the lid of each pannier that can be used for clothing, riding gear or kit that can also be operated with one hand.
 - The lids have a resistance feature built into the hinges so the bags can be opened and will stay partially open. This means you don't have to fully expose the contents to the elements.
 - Bags are fully welded and completely waterproof.
 - These are the narrowest (at 39" vs. 42" for *BMW* aluminum panniers), yet the largest volume luggage system I could find for my *BMW F800GS*. One benefit for *Jesse Bags* customers is they manufacture and stock *all* the parts for the racks and bags, so if anything wears out you can quickly order replacements. They'll even make repairs.



The lid locking mechanisms are the easiest latches I've ever used (one-handed, of course), and the fit and finish is top notch. My travel partner and I are now both outfitted with *Jesse Luggage* for South America, and I've decided to add either the 45-liter trunk or the 35-liter "pizza box" (a short version of the full size trunk) for the added security instead of a duffel on the back seat.

Prices for the large 10" *Odyssey II* luggage system range from \$1,080 to \$1,380, including all the racks and mounting hardware. This puts the *Jesse Bags* in the middle of the aluminum pannier market for pricing.

Every customer that buys from *Jesse Luggage Systems* has their order recorded with the lock number, so replacement keys are easy to obtain, and if you later order a trunk they'll automatically send it keyed to your side bags. In my case I plan to order a new key/lock set to re-key my riding partner's bike so we'll have the same key for both bikes.

Living with Jesse Bags

I've now been using *Jesse Bags* for several months and have come to love everything about them: size, looks, operation, and weatherproofing. *Jesse Bags* are fully welded with lots of seams and creases that make them the sturdiest aluminum panniers on the market. They're a premium luggage system that's extremely resistant to denting and damage.

The flip side is the difficulty of field repairs. OEM *BMW* panniers and many other aftermarket systems use lighter material designs that will bend much easier. This also takes much less effort to hammer back into shape with a rock or tool on the side of the road. The other thing is that once the bags/racks have been tweaked they can get in the way of the gas cap on the *F800GS* as it has an under-the-seat fuel tank—a non-issue for most other motorcycles.

I've become spoiled with how these bags look, the ease of how the lid latches work, how easy it is to get the bags on and off the bike, and how narrow they are. I love these bags and would say they're near perfect for most ADV riders looking for a large capacity luggage system. However, if you're planning on crashing a lot then you may want to consider a soft luggage option (*Jesse* now offers these, too) or panniers that are more pliable for field repairs.

MSRP: \$1,080.00 JesseLuggage.com



PROS

- Largest capacity aluminum panniers with the narrow profile
- Lids that can be opened partially and will hold position to protect contents from weather and prying eyes
- Made in the U.S.
- Latches double as carry handles
- Great customer service and support
- Very attractive for "boxes"
- Competitively priced
- Designed with one-handed operation in mind

CONS

- Rugged design makes field repairs more challenging
- Front area on luggage is small for external mounting of kit items
- Internal mount mechanism requires space to move and detach
- Some models have odd shapes for loading