



Backpack Comparo

Velomacchi Speedway vs BMW Function

By Wes Fleming #87301

ONE ITEM OF LUGGAGE THAT doesn't seem to get a lot of attention from the BMW crowd is the motorcycle backpack. Maybe it's that backpacks are often associated with "Squids" (a.k.a. sport bike hooligans), but maybe it's that many BMWs come equipped with spacious side and top cases. Sometimes, though, it's nice to toss all your stuff in one bag and either wear it or strap it to the back seat and go. Backpacks that can hold a laptop computer are especially handy for commuters, and

it's tough to beat a backpack for a quick weekend getaway.

The ones large enough to handle a weekend tend to be bulky and to be perfectly honest, kind of ugly. Fortunately, neither of the backpacks here suffer from either of these problems, which is why I was drawn to them.

Velomacchi's Speedway backpack has a large (23 liter), open main compartment with a five-liter outer pocket. It sports a uniform gray color scheme and an innovative quick-release buckle that has no trouble holding tight at higher speeds. The

straps can be tucked away, but their real appeal is the near-infinite adjustability they provide, along with stability provided without a chest cross-strap. The roll-top closure implies waterproof protection for the contents, but the latching mechanism that secures the top doesn't close positively. It occasionally pops open on me, but works best when the bag is full enough to keep a little upward pressure on the closure.

BMW's Function backpack has a larger (30 liter) main compartment with two sleeves built in, one for a laptop up to 15" and the other for whatever small items you



might want to put in it. There's an expansion pocket at the bottom of the pack, which can be accessed separately from the main compartment or unzipped to add five liters of space to the main compartment. There are several small zip-closure pockets on the front, plus a mesh pocket inside the zip lid at the top. An inner roll-top closure makes the main compartment waterproof. The standard backpack straps can be tucked away, and riding stability is provided with a standard chest cross-strap.

Comparing these two backpacks to each other wasn't easy, because they appeal to different aspects of my riding personality. The large main compartment of the Speedway is easy to load, easy to access, and roomy, while the inside of the Function has a handy spot for my computer and definitely has the storage capacity advantage with that big expansion area. Both are equally easy to strap to the back seat. The Speedway is more comfortable to wear when riding, but the Function is more comfortable to wear when off the bike, a difference that largely comes down to the innovative strap configuration on the Speedway.

When it comes to carting your helmet around off the bike, the advantage goes to the Speedway with its simple aluminum clip. Hook your helmet strap's D-ring to it and you're done. The helmet will flop around a bit, but it works. I wear an XL or 2XL helmet depending on the brand, and none of the helmets I own fit into the pocket BMW says it should. My wife's size Small Shoei fits in it though, and because the inner compartment's liner is waterproof, this pocket is a great place to put wet or dirty gear you don't want contaminating the rest of your stuff.

The Speedway has some small bonuses, such as the camera mounting plate and grippy stabilizing pads that help it stay in place when you're riding. There's also an obvious (small) pocket to hold emergency/medical contact information. If you bring your own bladder, there's also a place to stash a hydration sleeve. Bonuses on the Function are a little more difficult to define. The front pockets are small and don't hold much, but they're good places to stash things like business cards, small notebooks, pens and the like. The mesh pocket inside the top lid is nice for keys.

The focal point of each bag is, naturally,

the main compartment. The Speedway's main compartment is spacious and unadorned, which does make carrying a laptop a little less convenient. The advantage for laptop portage definitely goes to the Function. The bright off-white interior of the Speedway takes the win for visibility over the Function's red interior. The Speedway's main compartment feels like it's easier to access though, due to the roll-top opening that spreads wider than the Function's roll-top + zip-top, which can feel fiddly if you're in a hurry. The Function's roll-top plastic buckles that clip together feel more secure than the Speedway's metal-and-leather friction stays on either side of the top of the bag.

For my purposes, the Speedway is the bag I'm going to grab if I want to look cool and have to ride with the bag on my back. I'll be grabbing the Function when I need to securely transport my laptop or if I need to carry more gear than will fit in the Speedway, and I'll especially use the Function if I'm going to be strapping the bag to the back seat. Both are good choices depending on your needs, but for \$100 less, the Function delivers more capacity and function for the dollar.

Velomacchi Speedway – MSRP \$269, velomacchi.com

BMW Function – MSRP \$169, bmwmotorcycles.com

Speedway

28 liters (23 + 5)
1000-Denier "competition" fabric
Roll-top closure
Main compartment + 1 outer pocket
Tuck-away straps + top grab handle
Mounting straps for motorcycle
Helmet clip

Function

35 liters (30 + 5)
TPU-coated polyester & nylon
Roll-top inner bag, zip-top closure
Main compartment w/laptop (15") sleeve + lower expansion compartment + 4 outer pockets
Tuck-away straps + top grab handle + side grab handle on newer models
Mounting straps for motorcycle
"Room for a helmet" in expansion pocket



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