

I just returned from a short trip to Hot Springs, AR. I take lots of road trips. For me, it's a continual lifestyle of hauling bikes on the Pedal America production vehicle that holds a total of six bikes. Our rear hitch-mounted rack holds up to four bikes; the individual roof racks hold two. If I earned \$1 for each time someone on my crew racked or unracked a bike, I'd have probably have enough to fund production of two consecutive seasons...okay, well, maybe not that much.

Still, choosing the right rack system is easy when you know the options. The most common are trunk, rear hitch, or roof racks.

Though more common on sedans, many trunk racks are designed to fit SUV's too. They're convenient, cost effective, and easily adapt to different car models. But if not careful, your car's paint could sustain a scratch or two from the bike that's sits closest to the trunk or from the hooks that latch onto the trunk.

For Pedal America, rear racks are ideal. At about shoulder level so bikes are easy to load and unload for most everyone; plus, more space between the bikes and rear of the car protects the paint. User Manuals don't explain other benefits. We use ours as a clothesline, a bike stand, and a plastic garbage bag holder. The only inconvenience is accessing the back of the SUV's rear hatch door while the bikes are racked. Most racks swing down, but you really need to unrack the bikes first. If you don't want the inconvenience, [Yakima](#) makes a rack that swings outward, making access easier.

Roof racks are also practical, and sturdier than I could have imagined. When the Pedal America production crew drove back to Chicago after shooting in Napa Valley, we hit a blizzard in Wyoming. Winds gusted to 70 mile per hour. Highway patrol shut down the Interstate; it took us three hours to travel about 6 miles. The bikes up top stood solidly in place.

Of course, hoisting a bike onto a roof rack can be challenging until you grow used to it. Plus, low-ceiling garages can ruin your day - and your garage - and your bikes - if you forget they're up there. On the flipside, I once stopped short of pulling into a low-ceiling garage at a Whole Foods in Austin, Texas, and realized, "Hey, there are no bikes on the roof." It happens when you get so used to being conscious of them.

The other downside: I concur with the [Cool Biking Zone](#) blog that roof racks significantly cut your car's gas mileage - by almost half! That's a wallet guzzler for us, given that we travel cross-country when in production. While we *have to* travel with our bikes, *renting* bikes at your travel destination can save you money on gas.

No matter what type of rack you prefer, always check and, if necessary, tighten the nuts and bolts before each road trip to ensure safety. Happy cycling, and please share the road.

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