

## “How to keep that wet stuff out of your saddle bag contents!”

The rain was coming at me sideways. The trail going over the steep First Divide was running water down hill, like a creek with its share of wee waterfalls in it! This was just the first day of a long two day run, packing a trail crew into the Upper Duckabush Camp in the Olympic National Park (ONP), goodness, it was a wet trip. We received five inches of rain in three days. All of the creeks and rivers topped their banks. My water crossings on that trip were gladly short. However; for one unfortunate hiker who tried to ford the Quinault River at the Enchanted Valley (ONP) without removing her pack, it was sadly fatal! It takes a serious effort to keep all of ones possibles (necessary stuff), dry in their saddle bags. On this trip, I had no such worries! With forethought, I recently designed and built waterproof liners for my saddle bags. Living and doing some serious riding in Western Washington State, one either figures it out or must overhaul and dry out all of the contents of their saddle bags, after each trip in the rain.

In my studies and reading about how this was achieved before me, I found



that the U.S. Cavalry supplied canvas liners for their trooper's saddle bags. Well now! No wheels to invent here, just take the info and run with it, "So I did". These liners have worked for me very well for many years and kept their contents dry as a bone.

*Photo #1 Liner shown here slides into one of my saddle bag pockets.*

*Note: Liner is longer than the pocket by design. This surplus will be rolled up (after it is pulled and tightly toggled shut) to remove leakage through the small hole it leaves in the middle.*



*Photo #2  
Waterproof liner  
lying on top of a  
saddle bag pocket.*

The material I used to create these waterproof liners is nylon pack cloth, which is coated with urethane and advertised as waterproof. This

can be obtained from a fabric store such as Seattle Fabrics at [www.seattlefabrics.com](http://www.seattlefabrics.com), specializing in outdoor fabrics. The exact kind of material that I used is 420 D pack cloth. It is tough, but supple, making it easy to work with. The first thing I did was measure my saddle bag pocket, to get the area of the liner I was going to need to match it to. My saddle bag measured 12 inches wide, with a 3 inch gusset all of the way around it and 8.5 inches deep. To fill these, I obtained and cut two pieces of pack cloth 36 inches by 18 inches. Note: In addition, I needed two pieces of pull cord, each (approximately 24 inches long) and two toggles. I obtained these from the same fabric store. I surged around the top edges. I then folded the top over and sewed it into place, to make a runway for the pull cord to lay and run in. Next was to fold the liner material in half (18 inches square) with the inside out. I then surged down each side from the top to the bottom on both sides, forming a bag. Following this, I then threaded the piece of pull cord all of the way around the top of the bag

through its runway. The toggle was then put on the pull cord and its ends were tied together. The liner was complete, except to now turn it right side out and slide it into your saddle bag pocket. There should be enough material above the top of the pocket to be rolled up, to seal the top. Duplicate the above instructions to make the liner for the other side of the saddle bags.

There is one other method and that is to purchase a fabric water proof roll top bag for a liner. They are called "Big River Dry Bag" and can be found from a supplier at Sea Summit [www.seasummit.com](http://www.seasummit.com). Again you will need to measure your saddle bags to obtain the proper size, as they come in several sizes to choose from. They seem to cost \$20.00 to over \$50.00 each.

Years ago I wrote a piece called "Saddle bags for all seasons". In this work, I mentioned saddle bag waterproof liners, but neglected to tell you folks how to build them. This need jumped up after a couple calls from some fellows I know, asking me how to deal with wet saddle bags (not to mention sodden contents). One was so wet that the water was running out of it while still on the horse.

I can only imagine how wet this fellow's saddle seat must have been, with the water running out of his saddle bags. Wait just a moment! I do not have to imagine anything; all I have to do is remember! I've been there before. Good luck and think "Stay Dry".

Ed Haefliger

*"In every case, the goal of intellectual life was to understand in order to teach others, to enable the next generation to learn what you yourself have mastered and to build on it." (Quote: Unknown author)*

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