



PAC Designs Ultimate

Some people live out of their messenger bags. PAC Designs of Ontario makes bags for these people. Since 1989, PAC has been refining messenger bag design with a long line of firsts—suspension strapping, D-ring adjusters and the X shoulder strap are all on the list. After many iterations, the latest version of the Ultimate bag has come into play on the top-end of the messenger bag world. The PAC Ultimate, with a base price of \$260, is just that. Designed for all day courier work, this bag is equally at home on the back of a four-season commuter.

In the past, I've needed multiple bags for different uses. For everyday commuting, I needed a bag to carry clothes, lunch and riding essentials, but not the giant capacity that grocery shopping required. Commuting with the grocery bag was uncomfortable, and grocery shopping with the commuter bag impossible. Not so with the PAC Ultimate—the unique suspension strapping along with the bottom compression straps allow me to keep the bag snug for daily use, and also cavernous when necessary. The transformation is nothing short of amazing, with plenty of people remarking on the bottomless pit design that is adjustable to just the right size every time. The box-like shape of this bag distributes space in a manner that enables the Ultimate, while only 2600 cu. in., to hold more than my tapered, 3000 cu. in. capacity bag from a competitor. Inside sits a document sized mesh pocket and a collapsible divider to help keep things organized, along with a removable EVA back pad. The stated capacity does not include the outer, 2" deep by 13" wide, expandable pocket that is not crushed by a full main compartment—a huge plus if you've ever carried a sandwich to work.

The outside of the bag is three layers thick, four on the bottom.

Cordura outside, truck tarp middle layer, and a pack cloth innermost lining for a silky feel and no direct abrasion of the waterproof tarp lining, which will maintain waterproofness in the long haul. Ballistic nylon on the bottom makes sure that even after years of use and thousands of puddles, water isn't getting in. Velcro abounds to keep those straps tied down in the breeze. The flap features a much appreciated blinkie loop, and plenty of room for custom art. Shown is about \$40 worth of appliqué embroidery of Cordura panels with our own Mikey Pfaltzgraff's design. The optional \$18 side U-lock strap and \$10 pump holder ensures I don't forget either, without them ever being in the way. Along with the fairly common side anti-sway strap, PAC bags have the option of the \$21 X strap. The fold-away X strap enables you to spread the weight of a large load across both shoulders and chest very securely at the expense of optimal breathing.

I've continually been amazed with what I can comfortably carry in this bag. At one point an entire photo shoot's worth of supplies were stuffed inside for a cross-town jaunt—two monohead lights, lightstands, umbrellas, cords, lenses and the camera body itself. Large grocery runs and plenty of six packs have taken a ride. As someone who carries a messenger bag on a daily basis, this bag is it. It has everything I've ever wanted, along with features I never knew I needed. The price is high, \$340 as shown, and the bag is a hefty 5lb. 2oz.. But just like bikes, you get what you pay for, and sometimes weight has to be sacrificed in consideration of comfort. Going from "the usual" messenger bags to the PAC Ultimate is like the jump from rigid to suspension—not for everyone, but a technological improvement worth it for some.

—Brad Quartuccio