Bicycles

How do you carry all those bicycles you want to take along with you on your trip? The receiver is taken up by the trailer hitch, or the truck bed has the fifth wheel hitch in it and there isn't much room left. What do you do?

Well, there are a couple of options available to carry those bicycles and tow your trailer at the same time.

Inside

An obvious choice, but perhaps not practical depending on the type of trailer or the type of bicycle or bicycle riding you do. You may want the bicycles to be cleaner than what they might be after a good day's ride. But inside is an option.

Out back

What about on the back of the trailer somewhere? But where, and how? There are 3 commercially available options more specific for RV's, a few ready-made solutions and a few custom options. Let's look at the commercial products first.

Spare tire mounted bicycle rack

This type of bicycle rack fits over the top of the spare tire that is mounted to the rear bumper and usually only holds 1-2 bicycles.

Bumper mounted bicycle rack

These bicycle racks usually hold 1-2 bicycles, but there are some that can hold up to 4.

Ladder mounted bicycle rack

This type is more of a "hanger" than a rack. It hooks over the ladder on the back of the trailer and holds (hangs) the bicycles by their tires. Only made for 1-2 bicycles.

These types of racks are less expensive than the following options and range in price from $40 to $150. If you use one of these types of carriers, make sure that whatever you attach it to (bumper or ladder) is capable of handling the extra weight of the rack and the bicycles. Trailer bumpers are not well known for their ability to support a lot of extra weight. They make a great location to store the sewer hose and hold a spare tire, but the extra weight of a loaded bicycle carrier might be too much for it. Check with your dealer or manufacturer to find out for sure.

Bumper mounted receiver

There are a few adapters that act as a receiver tube that can be bolted onto the rear bumper of some trailers. They are the standard 2" size, and will accept all sorts of accessories, like bicycle racks and cargo boxes. This would allow you to use the same bicycle rack or other accessories behind the trailer that could be used behind the tow vehicle when the trailer is not hitched up. Since this receiver tube would be more versatile and less expensive, it is a popular option for people that already have a bicycle rack they use in the tow vehicle's receiver, but it must be used with caution when on the back of a trailer.

Since this option can accommodate more than a 2-bicycle carrier, it may be too much weight for the rear bumper to handle. Again, check with your dealer or the manufacturer to find out how much weight the bumper can handle.

Pop-ups

Any more than 2 bicycles plus the carrier on the back could dramatically impact the tongue weight, towing characteristics and towing safety. I would check with your dealer for options for loading bicycles on the roof of the pop-up. Many of the bicycle racks on top of cars and SUV's will also work on pop-ups.

Travel trailers

In a similar way, but not to the same extreme, too much weight on the back of a travel trailer could impact the amount of tongue weight and therefore affect handling and towing characteristics. The larger the trailer, usually the more weight on the tongue and the less of an impact from a bicycle rack on the back. But for shorter, lighter trailers, this could be as big a problem as for the pop-ups. One of the RV-related bicycle racks with 1-2 bicycles should be okay, but check the capacity of the bumper or ladder first.

Fifth-wheels

Not much of a problem here. An extra 50-75 pounds from a couple of bicycles and a rack will have little impact on the pin weight and should not affect handling. Make sure the bumper or ladder is strong enough to support the weight.

Custom made

Another option you could investigate is having a welding shop fabricate a special hitch for your trailer or fifth wheel. (I'm leaving pop-ups out of this one since the added weight would cause too many problems.)

Some call it an "H" hitch because of the shape it has. What the welding shop would do is weld two pieces of steel width-wise between the frame rails towards the rear of the trailer. Then they would attach the 2" (inside dimension) square tube down the center of the trailer to the two cross-beams and extend it far enough towards the rear of the trailer so it could be used as a receiver for a bicycle rack or other accessory holder.

Although this would be much sturdier than attaching something to the rear bumper, it will also weigh a lot more and could compound the tongue weight issues mentioned earlier. It could also get in the way of possible future repairs to holding tanks usually found at the rear of the trailer. And some manufacturers supposedly don't like it very much if you weld something else to the frame and may void the warranty.

Up front

Yes, up front, on a front-mounted receiver. Any bicycle rack or accessory carrier will fit in a 2" receiver regardless if it's in the front or in the back. That is, assuming you can get a front-mounted receiver for your vehicle. You could check with your vehicle dealer or check out the **Draw-tite website** (http://www.draw-tite.com/)under, you guessed it, front-mounted receivers. This option would be much easier and probably less expensive than taking your trailer to a welding shop and having something fabricated just for you. You should be able to find a front-mounted receiver for less than $150.

Up top

Either on top of the tow vehicle or on the top of a pop-up. Although this probably won't work for pickups, it might work for SUV's and cars depending on how high the roof is and how heavy the bicycles are. Yakima is the most common brand of roof mounted bicycle racks. Check with a local bicycle shop or quality sporting goods store for more information.

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