



Pros & cons
 + Easy to fit and robust
 + Fits most conventional bikes
 – May obscure number plate

Thule OutWay Hanging three-bike rack

Study boot rack that folds down for storage

£399.99 thule.com

Unless you own a van-based MPV, it's not always practical to throw your bike in the back of the car. For our family, the deciding factor was the arrival of a small person. It was time to buy a bike rack.

Thule is a brand synonymous with quality and durability. We chose an adjustable boot rack that could fit three bikes (15kg max for each), planning for a long-term future. Such thinking is necessary, as even with the Cycling UK discount at Halfords this rack is very much an investment. (But note that the two-bike version is £30 cheaper.)

The Halfords and Thule websites allow you to check your car's compatibility for the racks they offer, with the former offering to fit the rack for a small fee. A fitting shouldn't be necessary if you're au fait with YouTube tutorials, as it is fairly self-explanatory. There's a lot of twisting the dials to get the tension just right initially, but after setting it up once, fitting the rack again shouldn't take more than 15 minutes. Ideally you want some assistance when (re)fitting it.

Once set up, the rack is like part of the car. To make sure it was secure I gave it a good shake. It moved but only as much as the car

did. Depending on the model of your car, when loading you might need to consider getting another number plate as the bikes could obscure the original.

The kit comes with straps and struts to stop the bikes banging against each other. These are rubber but not especially robust. Used to Voile bikepacking straps, I overtightened the rubber bands, which snapped.

Once the bikes are on, don't expect to open the boot unless you take the bikes off. Without the bikes the boot is accessible, but the additional weight is likely to mean you'll need a steadying hand to keep it open. There's a small cable lock to keep your bikes secure. You could probably snip it with some kitchen scissors so don't rely on this.

On the road, if you've fitted your bikes properly, then you'll have no worries. We drove to France, taking a ferry, and the bikes were as secure at the destination as they were at the departure point. ●

Sam Jones

Verdict

Like a good lock, it's worth investing in a decent car rack to keep your bike(s) safe. You can trust the Thule OutWay Hanging not to dump them on the motorway.

Other options

PLANET X BIKE RACK 3 BICYCLES £39.99

A wallet-pleasing price (at time of writing) but not adjustable and won't take kids' bikes. Probably best for lightweight bikes rather than heavier hybrids and mountain bikes.

planetx.co.uk



THULE FREEWAY 3 £145

Less adaptable and convenient than the OutWay, Thule's 'budget' rack still comes highly recommended and will carry three bikes weighing up to 45kg in total.

thule.com

