Pirates' Lair Stealth Backrest/Tail Rack Plate

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MY SLIGHTLY USED 2020 R 1250 RS CAME WITH A REMOVABLE pillion backrest and tail rack plate installed by the previous owner. The pieces were obviously high-end and feature an embedded BMW roundel, so I assumed they were factory accessories. However, I couldn't find them in any BMW catalog, nor did they show up in any internet search. I knew such precision-crafted items hadn't been made in someone's garage, so I posted photos on the R 1200/1250 RS forum (r1200rsforum.com) and asked if anyone could identify these mysterious works of moto-art.

As has almost always happened in my experience with forum queries, I promptly got helpful information. A couple of members recognized my setup as a Pirates' Lair product. It's called the Stealth Backrest, and it's available for the 2015+ R 1200 R/RS and 2018+ R 1250 R/RS. Note: Your bike must be equipped with BMW's tail rack, which was optional on some of those models. The package includes a thick aluminum plate that mounts atop the BMW rack and can serve as a slightly larger, much flatter platform for luggage, with numerous options for attaching bungees or other straps.

This extra-heavy-duty piece rests on stubby sleeves encasing each of its six mounting screws, creating a thin cavity between it and the OEM rack. Hidden within this space is a slot on the plate's bottom, into which the backrest's supporting bracket gets inserted and then locked in place with a convenient knob-topped screw passing through the plate's upper surface. If you want this knob out of the way of luggage carried with the backrest in place, it can simply be replaced with a screw. When the backrest is off, the knob is gone, too. Installation is super-easy, involving removal of the OEM rack's plastic silver faceplate and substitution of the screws and sleeves supplied by Pirates' Lair for the screws securing the black plastic OEM top case dock to the main aluminum structure beneath.

The plate's subtly textured black finish and precise machining make it a handsome and sturdy addition, with or without the backrest. Although it must be removed to fit a hard top case, many soft luggage options work just fine with the plate mounted, including some of BMW's tail packs with pockets that slip onto the OEM tail rack and then strap to the pannier posts. Pirates' Lair also sells a Saddleman Deluxe Roll Bag that fits nicely on their Stealth Backrest setup.

Now, about that roundel… Pirates' Lair, like any other third-party accessory manufacturer, is forbidden from profiting off the BMW logo. They can, however, purchase a 27mm roundel from BMW, embed it in their product's purpose-built recess and impose a surcharge for this feature to exactly cover their wholesale cost. Hence, you can buy the Stealth Backrest with a factory-look roundel on its tail plate for $13 more than the base model.

The backrest pad is expertly upholstered by well-known aftermarket seat manufacturer, Sargent, with attention to matching its exterior material with BMW's OEM seat covers. Along with the roundel, this creates a perfectly factory appearance—the stealth element. Functionally, the backrest does exactly what you'd expect, providing your passenger with long-range comfort and a greatly enhanced sense of security, and you don't have to mount a backrest-equipped top case to achieve these benefits.

Top-notch build quality and functionality come at a price, of course. This Stealth Backrest/tail plate combo will set you back $420 without the roundel, or $433 with it (USPS Priority shipping included). Other Stealth Backrests, some of which do not utilize an additional tail rack plate, are available for different BMW models (and other motorcycle brands). Check the Pirates' Lair website for the full range of options. Each unit comes with a three-year replacement warranty. While you'll have to decide if the value of such an accessory justifies a price rivaling that of a whole new seat, I can assure you no aftermarket farkle out there exceeds this one's craftsmanship and attention to detail.

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