

THULE:

RACKS, CARRIERS, MOUNTS, AND MORE

In the world of those who have a lot of toys to haul around on the top of their cars, the folks who learn the hard way are the ones who buy the discount car rack at the local fleet store. Somewhere down the road, they watch, through rearview mirrors, the ballet of gear dancing along the highway—canoes gliding quietly through the air, mountain bikes doing somersaults down the yellow line, clothing flowing in an impressive stream of colors from the roof of the car while the top of the box carrier rhythmically flaps in the sixty-mile-an-hour breeze. It is at such climactic moments in the theatre of life that the viewer whispers, "I should have bought the Thule."



The Swedish-owned Thule company, established in the 1940s, was well-known throughout Europe long before it moved into the American market in 1981 with its car rack system. The company began in the United States with three products: Swedish furniture, Eldon electrical boxes, and racks, but by 1985, it was clear that the American market was a different ball game than the European. Åke Skeppner, then selling racks out of a station wagon at various sporting events and now president of Thule worldwide, knew that the company's strategy had to change. They dropped the furniture and began concentrating on their auto rack systems, which had already been very successful among windsurfers. By 1989, the company had bicyclists on board, and by 1992, they moved the company to a 58,000 square-foot building in Seymour, Connecticut, their present location at which they manufacture their line of racks and employ 115 people (Thule has a separate box carrier manufacturing plant in Denver, Colorado, which began operations in 1994).

There are two features of Thule products that make them the best in the eyes of consumers. First, the products are

intelligently designed and superbly constructed. In short: the equipment simply does not fall apart. It endures—the racks actually enhance the resale value of cars in the eyes of some. The second feature that makes Thule a leader is the fact that their rack system is the ultimate in versatility, both in terms of the automobiles they fit and the types of equipment they are able to support. The company offers four bar sizes (one of which *will* fit your car), several types of "feet" (which connect the rack to the vehicle) to

accommodate different roof lines, and a myriad of carriers, which attach various objects to the rack, such as: bicycles, skis, snowboards, sailboards, surfboards, masts, kayaks, canoes, and boxes—which, in turn, carry even more stuff!

You can find out more about Thule products by calling their Seymour, Connecticut office (213/881-9600) or visiting their web site: www.thuleracks.com. And by the way, it's not THOOL, it's TULL.



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