

Shovels / Sand racks



Shovels and sand racks belong to the basic equipment of offroaders. Everyone who has visited eg Africa and drove outside of the ‚maintained‘ earth roads knows how helpful they can be. However, there exists a huge choice of brands, types and price categories. You can choose between simple folding spades up almost to platin covered buckets. For sand racks, the selection ranges from heavy duty aluminum/steel racks to kevlar fiber to rubber racks. (Originally, the sand racks were built by the American army for temporary runways during 2nd world war).



I had to make some decisions. The folding spades are small and cute to look at, but in my view don't qualify for offroading. It must be something more hand-tight but nevertheless not too big. And because my colleagues should also be involved in digging operations, I always carry two pieces with me. One source to look at is military liquidation; eg <http://www.armyliqshop.ch>. However, even my shovels are a compromise between sand digging and stony substrate.



With sand racks, the whole story gets somewhat more complicated. As I travel often on my own, I bought four massive aluminum racks, each 150 cm long. I was told that I can even construct temporary bridges with them. However, I never tried it out so far. Today, my choice might be different and I only would buy half the length of them (weight, rearing up when driving over them and potentially damaging the underside of my car). Sawing them in half would be an option though, but for the moment it would still ‚hurt‘ me somewhat. The new kevlar fiber racks have some decisive advantages relative to my heavy aluminum racks, specifically in the desert. They are light, flexible and very robust. However they have a prohibitive price ticket. Whether they can prove their use also in mud and snow I don't know.



It is important though that whenever sand racks are used that they can be found again (specially in the desert). This sounds weird but sand racks have the characteristic to slip away under the wheels and dig themselves deep into the sand when you drive over them (sometimes some meters). Therefore I always fix a 5m cord with a tennis ball to them or attach the cord directly to the vehicle. The chance that they are lost diminishes a lot. But doing the latter, watch out that the the cord is not being drawn around the wheel.