

Review by Kristen Greenaway

# Locking Cables and Straps for Kayaks

**C**an you imagine the dull, sinking feeling you'd have in the pit of your stomach if you left a restaurant and came out to your vehicle to discover that your beloved kayak wasn't on the roof rack where you'd left it? Theft is becoming a growing problem these days as sea kayaking rises in popularity, and boats are getting more expensive. It's a wise boatie who invests in a locking security system that will offer a deterrent for would-be thieves. Such systems help ensure that your precious boat stays on top of your vehicle when you have to leave it there.

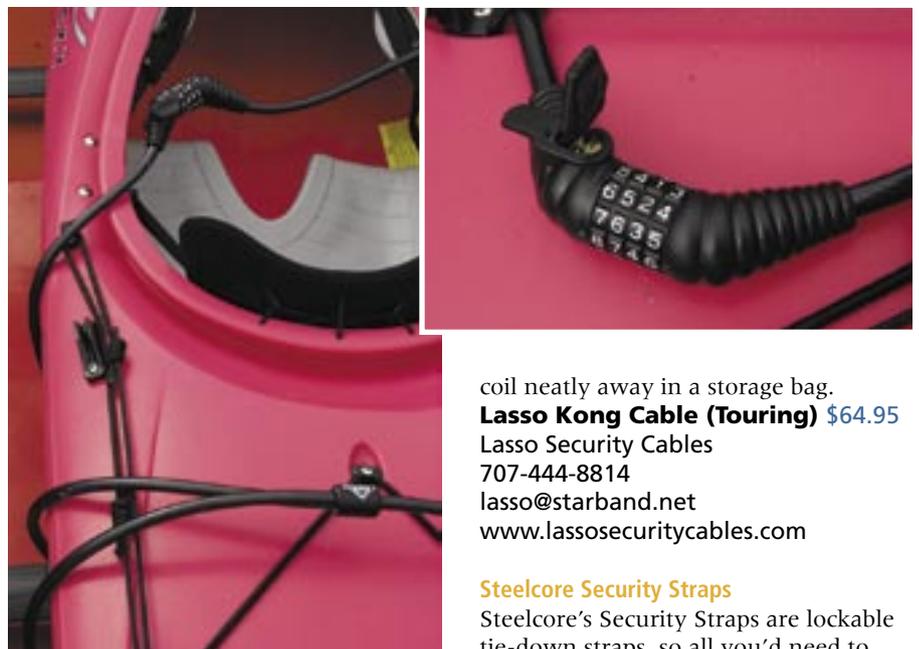
Kayaks don't lend themselves well to locking up (unless they're equipped with a stout U-bolt or molded-in stainless steel towing bar), but the four products here will help keep your kayak from disappearing from your roof rack. Of course, any cartop-based security system requires that your roof racks be locked to your vehicle. It's all too easy to unscrew the roof rack and slide a cable or locking strap off your boat.

## Kong Cable Lasso

The Kong Cable from Lasso Security Cables is effectively just that—cable lassos for each end of your boat. After you've strapped your boat to the roof rack, loop one lasso over the bow and under the roof rack, and loop the other lasso over the stern. The two ends meet in the middle and lock together via a four-number combination or with a key. If you happen to forget your combination, the Kong Cable has a "combo finder," whereby a "searching key" is fitted into the locking unit, and via a simple procedure, you can release the combo mechanism.

The Kong Cable is made of galvanized steel aircraft cable coated with vinyl to

Kong Cable by Lasso Security Cables, Security Straps by Steelcore, Lockable Tie Downs by SPT, Python Cable by Master Lock



Kong Cable Lasso from Lasso Security Cables

an overall diameter of half an inch. The Kong Cable looks strong—the protective vinyl casing magnifies the cable, making it look even thicker. The Kong Cable can be used to lock your boat to any secure object, rather than only a roof rack. You just need to be careful that the two lassos are brought together at the lock tightly enough to ensure they can't be slipped off either end of the boat. You can take up slack if you need to by wrapping the cable a few times around the roof rack or the object you're locking the kayak to. The cables

coil neatly away in a storage bag.

**Lasso Kong Cable (Touring) \$64.95**

Lasso Security Cables

707-444-8814

lasso@starband.net

[www.lassosecuritycables.com](http://www.lassosecuritycables.com)

## Steelcore Security Straps

Steelcore's Security Straps are lockable tie-down straps, so all you'd need to add to the usual routine of strapping the kayak on your roof rack is turning the key on the buckles.

One-inch (25 mm) polypropylene webbing encases a single steel aircraft cable. The buckle is hardened aircraft aluminum, and the lock is saltwater-resistant stainless steel. The buckle is bare metal, so be careful not to bang it against your shiny composite hull or the roof of your car. Cinching the buckle against your boat is not a problem, as the webbing loops back under the buckle, separating the buckle from the hull.

Once you've tied your boat down,



Security Straps by Steelcore

any excess strapping can be tucked away against the buckle with a handy toggle-tightened loop of bungee cord. The bungee also packs the coiled webbing away when not in use, and because it's permanently looped to the buckle, you won't lose it.

**Steelcore Security Straps**

**\$85 (9-foot pair); \$95 (12-foot pair)**

Lockdown Co.

Makers of Steelcore Products

714-879-7999

info@steelcore.net

www.steelcore.net

**SPT Tour Lockable Tie Downs**

The Lockable Tie Downs from SPT are also cable-cored straps that lock at the buckle using a key. The two hardened stainless steel cables are stitched into 33 mm webbing, and the die-cast buckle is protected with a soft rubber casing, making the Tie Downs gentle on your boat.

Quick and simple to use, your boat can be secured to your roof rack in the same amount of time it normally takes to strap it down. The buckle is designed to be difficult to latch unless the strap is under tension. This helps assure that the straps are tight enough to secure the kayak when you lock it up.

**SPT Tour Lockable Tie Downs**

**\$69.95**

Stick Protection Technology

info@stickprotection.com

www.stickprotection.com

U.S. sales: Sea To Summit,

www.seatosummit.com

Canadian sales: Rock Gear Inc.,

www.canada-outdoor.com



Lockable Tie Downs by SPT

**Python Adjustable Locking Cable by Master Lock**

The Python from Master Lock is a cable with one end attached to a key-operated locking fixture. The fixture swivels 360 degrees for convenient key access. The Python's 3/8-inch (10 mm) cable is 72 inches (192 cm) long and encased in



Python Cable by Master Lock

transparent soft vinyl. For easy storage, you can remove the lock head by sliding it off the opposite end of the cable, and there's also a permanent Velcro strap to keep the entire cable and buckle neatly looped.

A single Python will work if your boat has some kind of fixture that the cable

can be threaded through, then around your roof rack or other secure object. To secure your kayak on a roof rack in the way the other systems reviewed here do—by cinching up on either side of the kayak's widest point—you'll need a pair of Pythons.

**Python Adjustable Locking Cable**  
\$23.99 (retail prices may vary)  
Master Lock  
800-464-2088 (email via website)  
www.masterlock.com

## Testing

As in any theft-deterrent system, most locking devices can be overcome given time, tools and access. Fortunately, many thefts are "crimes of opportunity." A thief happens upon your boat, notices that it's not locked down and knows he'll be able to remove it from your vehicle quickly and get away unnoticed. Many thefts can be prevented by increasing the time or number of tools required to steal your belongings. The beauty of all four of these security systems is that their components are visible, providing an effective initial

deterrent. For a thief expecting only to unbuckle or cut tie-down straps, each of these security systems would send him looking for easier targets.

*The Two-Minute Rule* is a book by Robert Crais about a thief who gets caught during a bank robbery because he violates the bank robber's rule of getting in and out of the bank in two minutes, the time it takes police to respond to the bank alarm. Thieves looking for the easy heist and a quick getaway measure their time in seconds. A job that takes more than a minute or two is much more likely to draw attention and intervention.

I took a shot at using the common tools of the trade to get through the four locking systems. First on the list were the Kong Cable and Master Lock Python. It took me 45 seconds to cut through their plastic cable sheaths with a pair of side wire cutters and another five minutes to cut through the cables themselves.

I attacked Steelcore's security straps and SPT Lockable Tie Downs with the wire cutters, and after five minutes of gnawing away at the webbing, I'd still not reached the internal cables. A hacksaw did make short shrift of the webbing on both products, but again,

using the wire cutters, it took another eight minutes to gnaw through a cable.

(In separate tests conducted by the *Sea Kayaker* staff, all of the cables resisted wire cutters as well as a bolt cutter that readily dispatches ¼-inch thick steel chain links. The author and the *SK* staff did find tools that could cut cable quickly, but lest we offer advice to thieves, that information is being withheld here.)

None of these locking systems can guarantee that your boat will never be stolen. All four manufacturers point out that their security systems offer only an increased level of security. No locking system can withstand the efforts of someone absolutely intent on stealing your boat, but it's far more likely that the bad guys who see a kayak secured with any one of these systems will walk past and look for a boat that ain't locked down. **SK**

*Kristen Greenaway is a New Zealander whose passion for boating started when her family spent her preschool years cruising on a 32-foot sloop. An adventure junkie, she completed her first WaterTribe Everglades Challenge (as KiwiBird) this year. She currently resides in Durham, NC, where she heads up development for a nonprofit.*