

Vertex Photographic

Molar TV Bean Bag™ - Product Instruction Sheet

Introduction

TV stands for travel version. This bean bag is basically the same as the Molar bean bag except it is smaller and lighter. Sometimes when traveling obtaining 16-17lbs. of fill material can be difficult. The TV requires 8-9 lbs of beans, rice, bird seed, or shelled corn. To make it even lighter you can fill it with 5 lbs. of black sunflower seeds. Typically the heavier the bag the more stable it is; however, the TV has adequate stability for large lens. Often some people do not want to handle a bag that weighs 16-17 lbs. so the TV is a lighter option.

We have added a layer of canvas material on the top surface. Some people prefer this material on the top since it is less slippery than nylon material.

Fill Material

For use here in the U.S., there are a lot of different fills that can be used. Beans, bird seed, or shelled corn provide the most weight. This makes the Molar TV bag more stable and solid feeling, particularly if you leave the bag on the vehicle door or windows when you move from one location to another. Pinto beans typically come in 4lb (1.81Kg) plastic bags at the grocery store. The Molar TV bag filled with pinto beans, rice, shelled corn, or bird seed will weigh 8lbs depending on how full you like it. The downside to the heavier fills is carrying the bag around. Lighter options are black sunflower seeds which will make the bag weigh 5lbs.

Bird seed and black sunflower seeds are easily purchased at places like Wal-Mart and Home Depot and are relatively inexpensive. They can also be used as bait if needed and if accidentally spilled something will eat it. We suggest going with the heaviest fill you are willing to handle. Remember, the heavier the bag, the more stable it tends to be. This becomes even more important when you are using a big lens like a 400mm F2.8, 500mm F4, or a 600mm F4. If you are using a lens like a 70-200mm the lighter fills should be fine but again the heavier the better.

If you are going to use them primarily here in the U.S. and you plan on driving then the heavier fill, like beans will probably be your best choice. If you intend to fly to a location in the U.S. you can opt for the lighter fill, or even go to the grocery store, Wal-Mart or Home Depot and buy beans, bird seeds, shelled corn or rice there.

If you are going to Africa you will probably end up with beans. When you arrive in Africa your tour leader or driver/guide can help you acquire the beans you need. Remember they may ask you how many Kilos, not pounds you need. There are 0.4536 Kilos per pound. 8×0.4536 equals 3.63 kilos. So to play it safe ask for 4 kilos of beans. It is always better to have more fill than you need. The beans will probably come to you in a burlap sack, not the nice little four pound plastic bags you get at the grocery store. Make sure you save the burlap sack so you can empty the beans back into that bag at the end of your trip. You can give them to your African driver/guide, who can always cook them, or give them to someone else who would like them.

Filling the Molar TV Bag

First of all, be patient. This task can be a frustrating experience if you let it! Your fill can end up spilling and going everywhere. You may want to fill the bag over a bucket or box to catch any you drop. You can cut the corner of the plastic bag the beans came in and slowly pour them into the zippered opening. You can also make a large size funnel by taking some fairly stiff paper and rolling into a funnel shape. Place a piece of tape on it to help maintain the funnel shape. The opening at the bottom has to be fairly large or the beans will block the opening, and not pass through. Don't let go of the funnel until all the beans have passed through it. It can easily tip over and spill beans everywhere.

When you get the bag as full as you want make sure you close the zipper completely. The little black pull tab should be under the nylon tape cover. I recently had a customer report to me a device he picked up at Wal-Mart called a Scoop n' Funnel. It is a plastic combination scoop and funnel that has a little closing gate in it that allows you to scoop up your fill and then stick the funnel end into the bag and open the gate allowing the fill to go in the bag. The Scoop n' Funnel costs \$3. It is in the bird feed section of Wal-Mart.

It is not a bad idea to test filling the bags at home so you know how much volume you prefer. When in doubt get more than you think you will need. You can always leave some out, or give them away.

Using the Molar TV Bag

For use on a vehicle door or window the two vertical portions (which I call ears) hang down over the door or window providing a flat surface on the top. The bag will always be more stable if it is resting directly on the car door frame; however, sometimes you have to roll the window up to get the camera to a comfortable shooting position. You can also lay your lens directly on top of the flat surface or if you are using a big lens like a 500mm or a 600mm then you may want to consider attaching a flat plate to the foot of the lens. There are even plates you can get that have panning capabilities or some that you can attach a ball head to. The two straps on the bottom are for carrying the Molar TV bag but can also be used to secure the bag to the vehicle. You can simply tie the Molar TV bag via the straps to the door handle or anything else available. Bungee cords are another means of securing the bag.

The Molar TV bag can also be used on a flat surface by turning it upside down or on its side. If you turn the bag upside down you may find the ears provide a very nice cradle for the lens. Try it in both directions, i.e. the lens between the ears or across the top of the ears.

Sometimes, depending on the vehicle window height, seat height and your body length you may find your eye does not come up to the viewfinder when the window is rolled all the way down. This is particularly true if you are using a plate on your tripod foot of your lens. You may need to be creative and put some sort of seat cushion or rolled up blanket on your seat to raise your eye level up. You can raise the window if you need to get your camera/ lens higher but having the bean bag on the door frame is the most stable option. If at all possible test before you go out and shoot. If you are at home and using your own vehicle you should be able to determine the best position. If you are on a trip with a rental vehicle or any unfamiliar vehicle, test the position before you head out to start shooting.

Care and Maintenance

Try not to drop or throw the bag around. Even though we have hot cut all the fabric and double stitched all the seams, it still puts unneeded stress on the bag when it is thrown around or dropped a lot. Try not to get the bag wet. The fabric is coated with a water repellent finish, but some moisture can still get in. Some fill materials like rice will absorb water.

We do not recommend leaving the Molar TV bag exposed to sunlight over an extended period. The materials in the Molar TV bag are nylon. Nylon is the strongest material available, except for some very expensive exotic materials. However nylon will deteriorate with extended UV exposure.

If you have to wash the Molar TV bag, do it by hand with gentle agitation and any mild soap. Do not put it in the washing machine. Let it air dry indoors or in the shade, not in the sun.

Warning

Any time you put your lens/ camera up on any bean bag on a car door or window you risk the chance of it falling out and causing serious damage. With that in mind, please be very careful and pay attention to the stability of your camera gear. You may find when you are driving around in a photographic area you will be tempted to leave the bean bag on the car door and maybe even your lens/camera on the bean bag. Often, we only have seconds to get a picture of a bird or animal so having your camera gear ready to go is sometimes desirable.

If you do decide to leave your gear on the car door while you are changing location make 100% sure you have a firm grip on your camera gear and realize there is a risk involved. You may want to consider attaching a piece of cord or bungee cord to the 1" tape carrying handle on the bottom of the bag to some point inside the vehicle to help stop the bag from falling out of the vehicle. Finding a place to attach a cord or bungee cord is more difficult these days now that electric windows are more prevalent. If you go to a foreign destination like Africa and want to leave your bean bags installed on the vehicle please consider lashing them to something on the vehicle. The roads in Africa are very rough and if you don't secure the bean bag it could easily bounce out of the vehicle.

Here is some new information to consider. I just received a bean bag from one of my customer that had some small holes in the fabric. After inspecting the bag, it was evident some very small bugs in the birdseed he used to fill the bag had actually eaten holes in the fabric. Some birdseed is cleaner than others. So the bottom line is if you use birdseed as a fill you may encounter this same problem. Beans are pretty much a safe fill. I have not had any reports of problems with beans. We have also had reports of mice eating holes in a bean bag filled with birdseed. That customer had left the bag in a place where mice could get to it.

Plate Options

If you want to shoot off the tripod foot of your lens as opposed to laying the lens directly on the bean bag, then you will need to attach some sort of plate to the foot of your lens to give it a wider more stable base. Our new V2 plate is extremely versatile and cost effective. It can be Velcroed to the top of the bag and have a ball head attached or a ball head and Side Kick screwed on to the plate. You can also attach a gimbal head like a Wimberley head. The plate can free float on top of the bag and be directly attached to the tripod foot or you can install an Arca Swiss style clamp to make the plate quick releasable.

There are several other options. You can use two Wimberley M-1 quick release arms and attach one on each side of the tripod foot. These arms cost about \$66 each and can be purchased from www.tripodhead.com. Another option is the Big Foot plate from the Vested Interest. They cost about \$45-50 and can be purchased from www.vestedinterest.com. A third option is one of Walt Anderson's panning plates. It has an Arca Swiss clamp on top of the plate that swivels. They cost about \$200. At the moment Walt does not have a website but you can reach him at visualechoes@worldnet.att.net or on the phone in Illinois at 847-438-3587. The last option is to just take a piece of wood and drill two holes that correspond to the spacing on the bottom of your tripod foot or attach a clamp on top of the wood to make it quick releasable.

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