

iPhone Case Review Roundup: Vaja, Sena and DLO

Reviewed September, 2007 by Tong Zhang, Senior Editor

If you are one of the "a million and counting" iPhone users out there, you know how fortunate you are and how much fun it is to use the iPhone. But you also know how slippery the iPhone's surface is and might also worry about the large screen being unprotected. One of the first things an iPhone user might want to think about is getting a protective case. We take a look at four cases made by Vaja Cases, Sena Cases and DLO fro this review.

Vaja Cases

Vaja makes top-of-the-lines cases that not only look great but protect a device well. Their cases are generally more expensive than other makers, but you get a very fashionable and functional case for the money. Vaja offers several lines of iPhone cases including the i-Volution, "retro dockable" and horizontal pouch cases. We tested the i-Volution Top SP Holster and the i-Volution Holster models for this review.

Vaja i-Volution Top SP Holster - starting at \$80

The i-Volution Top SP is by far the best case we've seen for the iPhone, matching the style and sleekness of the device. The leather case adds very little bulk to the iPhone and feels and looks very slim. The design is well thought out: everything is made to measure and well thought out. The case covers the slippery iPhone surface to give you a better grip but leaves all ports and controls accessible.

With the case open, you can access the menu button, headphone jack, power button, SIM card and the vibrate slider. The camera lens is exposed. Speaker cutouts ensure that you can hear the iPhone clearly. You can use the USB cable to sync and charge, but cannot use the dock while the phone is in the case. The front cover of the i-Volution Top SP case protects iPhone's large screen with an ABS layer under the leather. The front cover has a lip that latches at top of the iPhone with a light press, and the cover doesn't open accidentally. The i-Volution Top SP Holster offers an optional belt clip system that's sturdy and well made.

The case is extremely well-built and highly stylish. As with all i-Volution cases, you have a huge numbers of colors and color combos to choose from. If you have the cash to spare and wish to dress your iPhone in style, this case isn't to be missed and is well worth the price.



Vaja i-Volution Top SP Holster



www.vajacases.com

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Vaja i-Volution Holster - starting at \$55

The i-Volution Holster is basically the Top SP Holster without the front cover. Vaja often offers casees with and without the front for many smartphones and PDAs. Like the Top SP Holster, the i-Volution Holster case is sturdy, perfectly fit the iPhone form and can prevent the slippery iPhone from sliding out of your hands by accident. It leaves the camera lens exposed and the speakers and sync/charge port at the bottom of the iPhone open. The case has a cut-out on the left side to give you access to the volume and vibration controls. Since it doesn't have a front cover, nothing on the front of the iPhone is protected or obscured. While the i-Volution Holster adds even less bulk to the iPhone, it leaves the large LCD exposed. Those who wish to toss their iPhone in a briefcase or a purse might worry about the screen without the protection. The i-Volution Holster is available in a great number of colors and offers an optional clip system.



Vaja i-Volution Holster

www.vajacases.com

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DLO HipCase - \$29.99 to \$34.99

DLO made its name in iPod related products and was one of the first companies to offer iPhone cases. The DLO HipCase model currently comes in 3 varieties: a brown leather case, a black smooth leather case and a black nylon case. All HipCase models are designed to hold your phone on your belt or bag/purse strap horizontally and offer a wide and sturdy belt clip. The cases have strong Velcro tabs that close the top cover securely and have cut-outs for the headphone jack. You can listen to music while the iPhone is in the case, but for most other functions you will need to take the phone out of the case. As far as hip-side cases go, the DLO cases are stylish, not too bulky and are comfy to wear. One thing you will still need to deal with though is the slippery iPhone when you pull it out of the case to make a call or use applications. The three models in DLO's HipCase series have a few slight differences:

The brown natural leather HipCase is the thinnest and adds the least bulk to the iPhone. The case looks minimalist yet attractive. The black leather HipCase has a smooth leather surface and a well-padded body. It adds slightly more bulk than the brown leather case but the padding gives your iPhone more protection. The inner leather on the black leather case is soft and the back has white seams. The black nylon HipCase is made of very durable nylon and is more resistant to water (though not water proof). The flip cover is well padded and the interior has a soft lining. The nylon case has a small cash/credit card pocket, a feature that the leather cases lack.



DLO black leather case



DLO brown leather case



DLO nylon case



All three cases are very well built and the price is reasonable.

www.dlo.com

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Sena MagnetFlipper Case - \$52

If you're a veteran PDAs or smartphone user, you've probably heard of Sena Cases. The case maker is known for its great leather quality, case design and craftsmanship. We tested the MagnetFlipper case for the iPhone for this review, but Sena also offers pouch cases and leather skin cases which includes one model that can fit in a docking station. These cases range from \$29 to \$52.



The Sena MagnetFlipper case is the thickest and most protective case in Sena's current iPhone case line-up. The European Napa leather used to make this case is fine-grained smooth and soft leather. There are strong re-enforced inserts in both front and back of the case with the front cover adding extra soft padding on top for the screen protection. The case has a thin leather lip with a snap on top and has cut-outs for the power button, headphone jack, SIM card (open the snap to access), the vibration and volume controls as well as the camera lens. The cut-out for the earpiece leaves the proximity sensor open so that when you put the phone near your head the screen turns off. As the name suggests, the flip cover is shut with a magnet that feels secure when the case is closed. The case and flip cover have holes for the speakers and sync/charge port. There is a thin pocket inside of the flip cover that you can use for a credit card or two and some cash.

Even though the Sena MagnetFlipper case is the bulkiest case in the lot, it offers fat padding for the screen and rigid inserts for the entire phone, a trade-off a cautious iPhone user might not mind taking.

www.senacases.com

Conclusion

Each case in this round-up has its unique features and style to offer at a variety of price points. My personal favorite is the Vaja i-Volution Top SP Holster case thanks to its style that matches the iPhone in an original way and it provides great protection for the phone. The cost is often the obstacle for Vaja case buyers. If you don't want to spend that much on a case, the DLO and Sena cases are no slouches and will go much easier on your pocketbook.