



Outside Online

April 13, 2010

Gear Guy

Featuring: The Aether 70

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/yyuqtj5>

Today's Question:

What pack is good for both quick weekend trips and longer outings?

That's kind of a 1990s question ("Don't the Red Hot Chili Peppers rock?!?") versus a 2010 one ("Is Coldplay the greatest band of all time?"). Because the Gregory Whitney (\$350) is very much a 1990s pack. It is HUGE—5,700 cubic inches in the medium size—and designed for big, heavy loads. The Baltoro (\$290) is a much trimmer pack (5 pounds, 9 ounces versus 6 pounds, 9 ounces for the Whitney), and has a relatively compact 4,300 cubic inches of capacity.

The Whitney was designed in a day when tents weighed six pounds, Gore-Tex parkas were a pound or more, and boots were five pounds a pair. Once upon a time, I would have said that was the pack to get, because only a pack such as the Whitney could handle long trips on the AT or elsewhere. But these days, the Baltoro should be plenty of pack for a trip of even five or six days or more (provided this is not the winter and you aren't lugging a big load of cold-weather gear). And it's much better for weekend trips. Really, if you have a good light gear setup, it will take up only half the pack. The rest of the space can be for food and fuel.

Then again, Osprey's Aether 70 (\$260) has the same room as the Baltoro, weighs pounds less, yet still has a suspension that is well up to the task of carrying gear on a long trip. You even could try REI's new Flash 65 (\$170) which is just a tad smaller than the Aether or Baltoro, yet users have found that it manages trips of up to a week.

So, my advice: Get a smaller pack and join the modern era. Big backpacking packs are just so...Dawson's Creek.

