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Paragon of Versatility

Featuring: The Variant 37

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As its name suggests, the Osprey Variant 37's greatest asset is its transmutability. In standard mode, this pack will bear a heavy guide load comfortably. Yet, when the approach necessities—the hip belt, frame sheet and lid—become superfluous, it takes only a minute to strip and cinch it down into a simple and light (34 ounces) alpine ascent bag. Its versatility makes it a true ice, rock and ski mountaineering pack. Osprey offers three sizes of Variant packs, with the suspension systems differing slightly to accommodate load capacities. The Variant 37's size, 2250 cubic inches, easily carried a full desert rack, rope, water, extra layers, food and first aid—just right for cragging or alpine day trips, or a summer weekend backpack.

Whether or not the pack was full, hiking and climbing, its weight sat well. The side compression straps were great for bringing the pack down to size, pulling weight against my torso for a dependable feel while also reducing volume for tight terrain, like chimneys. Speaking of chimneys, the Variant packs are built with a durable fabric for its weight. These aren't the lightest or most durable packs in the world, but the Variant 37 held up through many months of desert abuse.

That said, I'm so enamored with the Variant 37 that I'm abandoning all my other packs in Moab while I guide the Tetons and Sawtooths this summer. While many packs boast functional versatility, it's clear that the Osprey Variant 37 was designed with the influences of professional alpinists. This pack earns its keep as a Alpinist Mountain Standards medal winner.

Pros: Removable hip belt and lightweight HDPE frame sheet make this pack versatile as both a load-bearer and summit pack; light but strong; hydration pouch area is streamlined and does not eat up pack volume.

Cons: Shoulder straps cannot be tucked away easily for hauling; EVA back panel gets sweaty; no quick-release straps on lid.

Rating:

MSRP: \$169

Weight: 3 pounds, 8 ounce

Rating: 

