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Featuring: Manta 20

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With days getting longer, its officially big bag season! That's right folks, time to pack a lunch, extra clothing, tools, and a handful of spares for some backcountry adventure. At a claimed 20L cargo capacity (M/L size), Osprey's Manta 20 pack just meets my usual all-day ride carrying requirements. Given my experience with its cycling-specific nephew the Raptor 18, I knew to expect a well-built bag with an excellent reservoir.

Like the Raptor 18, the Manta 20 is an impressively built bag. Even on the shop floor, all of the materials seem well-chosen and the hardware is of consistently high quality. As it has to be- the Manta is backed by Osprey's "All Mighty Guarantee,"

A narrow pack for its 20L capacity (in the M/L size- the S/M size will hold 17L), the Manta is organized in three basic layers. At the rider's back is a simple suspension system consisting of a pair of LightWire bows that suspend a mesh layer above a ridged foam back panel. Working out from the suspension system is a bladder pocket bracketed by the ridged AirScape back panel on one side and well padded on the other. Where it seemed as though the Raptor 18 was overly compartmentalized, the Manta 20 allocates over half of its capacity to a large single pocket. For big days or light commuting, this is a big advantage- easily accommodating bulky layers, changes of clothing, and pizza-filled Tupperware. A decent-sized valuables pocket is suspended in the main compartment and lined with soft fabric to protect expensive electronics. Four compression straps do a good job of keeping differently sized loads under control and everything compact. At the outside of the Manta is a 2/3-height pocket with a couple of mesh organizers and a key tether and on top of that an open-topped pocket made of a stretchy material. Shared with the Raptor, the Manta's shoulder straps are some of the most comfortable I've worn while remaining reasonably breathable. During a freak spring snowstorm, I was happy to take advantage of the bright red rain cover that lives at the bottom of the bag- nobody likes stuffing their valuables into Ziploc bags as the skies open up.

Well thought out and easily one of the best-made packs I've ridden, the Manta 20 (with bladder) is also a good value at \$130. www.ospreypacks.com