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Review

Featuring: Karve 11

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Backcountry skiing is all the rage right now, but sometimes you just want to ride the lifts and find untracked powder beyond a resort's boundaries. In those instances, you don't need a full, heavy pack filled with tons of gear to get you through an entire day of touring. Enter the Karve 11 pack from Osprey. This small, functional pack is just the right size to carry your avalanche safety basics (probe, shovel) and still have space for water, food and an extra layer while shredding the sidecountry. I got to ski with the Karve 11 for the past few months, and found it the perfect pack for lift-accessed pow seeking.

The Karve 11 has tons of features that you would expect from a quality company like Osprey, such as a burly padded, reinforced front panel that deflects wear and tear (read: sharp ski edges while hiking,) a removable waist belt that's low profile and light, insulated hydration sleeve that won't let your water freeze, Z-shaped compression straps that are quick and easy to use and allow for diverse ways to carry gear, and of course Osprey's awesome padded back panel that sheds snow and allows back sweat to breathe away. Thanks to our low snow year so far here in Utah, I never got into the slack country with the Karve 11. But I did take the pack into the high backcountry in search of any snow to make turns on, and found this backpack to be very comfortable, light weight, form fitting, and quite competent despite being a bit too small for a true touring pack. At first glance, I thought the Osprey Karve 11 to be too small, even for short excursions. But much to my surprise, my shovel blade, hydration bladder, micro puff jacket, goggles, food and small gear like sunscreen, compass, cell phone and ski straps all fit inside... barely. On the up, I really dug the way the pack felt on my back. The shoulder straps are flexible and comfy, yet low profile enough not to get in the way or restrict arm movement.

On the whole, the Osprey Karve 11 backpack is a pretty sweet ski and snowboard pack. While it can be used as a backcountry daypack, it's a bit too small unless you're creative with your gear storage. The pack is definitely meant to be a sidecountry pack where you're getting to the off-piste goods via lift, but still need the requisite avy gear for safety. For that purpose, the Karve 11 is exactly the pack you're looking for.

