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Gear Review

Featuring: Zealot 16

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The Osprey Zealot 16, new for 2012, is proof of Osprey's obsessive compulsiveness for details. Gravity/freeriders will love the specific holders for body armor and full-face helmets on the lifts and shuttles. Weekend riders, who prefer epic jaunts over a variety of terrain, will appreciate the extra cargo space. All will recognize the value of the built-in tool kit and the many cool features packed in.

Hydration is the main reason for buying a hydration pack and Osprey has a unique design: A built-in hydration sleeve with elastic compression cord to increase water flow and minimize water motion on the trails or descents. With other packs, a half-full bladder becomes a wiggly, floppy, kielbasa-shaped thing that bounces around sloshing water. Not so with the Zealot. The bladder is a pre-formed 3L BPA- and PVC-free Nalgene molded plastic sheet with an antimicrobial treatment to prevent bacteria, mold and other general mankiness from growing. The bladder fits into the compression hydration sleeve and conforms to your back, even when full. It also makes removing, refilling, and inserting the bladder into a fully stuffed pack a breeze. With the packs of yesterday, this task is reminiscent of handling an uncooperative trout.

I've never had an Osprey pack that was uncomfortable and the Zealot is no exception. A ridge-molded foam back-panel, AirScape™ Suspension, creates a lightweight, supportive ventilated pack-to-back interface that allows for good airflow. Another comfort feature that you'll find only on Osprey packs is the BioStretch™ harness and hip belt. Since Osprey's roots began in the big pack market, it's a given that anything touching your hipbones has to touch comfortably. The BioStretch™ hipbelt is a mesh-covered perforated fabric hip belt that is both highly comfortable and adjustable to stretch when you need it to stretch. There are two zippered hip belt slash pockets to store keys or ProBars. The BioStretch™ harness completes the chest set-up of the Zealot. It has a mesh-covered elastic stretch sternum strap with a built-in magnetic clip for the bite valve. I love this feature because when I adjust the sternum strap to sit high on my chest, I can drink without using my hands. It's also intended to make reattaching your water tube to the sternum strap fast and easy with no hands.





And now, the removable, roll-out tool pouch. It's located in the zippered compartment on the bottom of the pack for better center of gravity. You can quickly remove and attach it with an easy snap. Elastic bungees keep tool-pouch contents secure and organized in or out of the pack.

A few other useful features that you'll get with the Zealot are:

- \* LidLock™ Helmet Clip, a little rubber oval piece attached to a bungee that secures your normal helmet to the upper section of the pack whenever you're off your bike.
- \* Front compression compartment to hold your body armor.
- \* Full-face helmet attachment.
- \* Pockets and storage aplenty, including a convenient zippered pocket on the shoulder strap to hold your Smart phone or iPod, a slash pocket that is lined with soft, heat embossed fabric to store your sunglasses and a generous main compartment to hold gear.
- \* Zipper pulls that even the most over-gloved hands can work.
- \* Reflective detailing to illuminate you to cars for riding at night and a blinkie light attachment.
- \* Cool graphics!

The Zealot comes in two sizes (10 and 16) and two colors (pitch black and octane blue).



Osprey Zealot Photo credit:  
[ospreypacks.com](http://ospreypacks.com)



Slideshow: Osprey Zealot integrated  
tool pouch