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Featuring: Aura 50

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We don't review gear too often on Daily Hiker these days, but every once and a while we'll come across gear we really like, and want to share with others. Osprey's new Aura 50 pack for women falls into that category. As a long-time fan of Osprey Packs, I was eager to test out the new Aura pack to see how it stacked up. I was intrigued by the Aura's 50 liter size because it seemed to be like a little sister to one of my favorite backpacking packs, Osprey's Ariel 65.

The Aura 50 was designed with the weight-conscious backpacker in mind. Weighing in at 3 pounds, the 50-liter size (3000 cubic inches) provides plenty of space for overnights or superlight thru-hiking, with loads between 35 and 50 pounds. It's a traditional top loading pack, but designed with zipper and stretchy stash pockets so that frequently-accessed gear (sunblock, maps, etc) doesn't fall to the bottom of the pack, never to be seen again. Some of the other features are pretty standard: internal hydration sleeve, ice ax/tool loops, removable top pocket/lid, and adjustable harness. It also comes with it's own sleeping pad straps (so you don't have to buy your own), which can be removed if you aren't using them. The Aura 50 also features Osprey's Fit-On-The-Fly™ hipbelt, which allows you to expand and adjust the padded portion of the hip belt, for maximum comfort. The air mesh back panel provides lots of support and breathability, and as a result, is quite comfortable.

One of my favorite things about Osprey packs are that every single feature serves a real purpose, and rarely are there superfluous design gimmicks that add extra and unnecessary weight (like bottle openers!). Every aspect of the pack is meticulously thought out and designed for the best performance. In my opinion, just like a good pair of hiking boots or running sneakers, a pack shouldn't need to be broken in for weeks before it's comfortable. The Aura 50 definitely meets this expectation. Straight out of the box, it was easy to adjust and dial in the suspension for the best ride and comfort. And while I haven't pushed the pack to it's absolute limits yet, it certainly handled a heavier than average load for a longer day hike with plenty of room to spare (3-liters of water in a hydration reservoir, food, extra layers, ice ax, first aid kit, guide book, camera, etc). What makes the Aura 50 a top pick in my book is how, once loaded and dialed in, the pack feels like an extension of yourself. It doesn't sway side to side, pull or pinch in weird places. It's comfortable and well-made, which are two of the top things I look for in a pack. Overall, the Aura 50 is a high quality pack and I plan to make it my go-to pack for longer hikes.

The Osprey Aura 50 retails for \$199. While on the higher end of packs, it's certainly well-made and will probably hold up to many seasons of abuse without fail.

