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Featuring: Variant 37

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/8lonkj2>

All it takes is one look to know that Osprey poured a ton of thought and development into the **Osprey Variant 37 Backpack**. My experiences with the Variant 37 this summer were great and I'm looking forward to a full winter of using it. Oh yeah, Osprey sent it to me to test and review on some Oregon summer ski mountaineering trips.

Out of the box I was stoked when I put the **Osprey Variant 37 Backpack** on for the first time and it fit me perfectly. I'm not that tall but I've had problems in the past with finding packs that fit. The Variant is jam packed with the features you want and none of stuff you don't care about. The main compartment is big and open. The hydration sleeve is easy to access when empty and can easily fit a 100 oz reservoir. The top compression strap doubles as a rope strap. The extendable lid moves as your loads expands or shrinks. A spindrift collar rolls up under the lid but can unrolled to keep snow out. The lid also features top and under pockets. The crampon compression sleeve is large enough to fit crampons and an avie shovel blade. Side compression straps help keep contents in the sleeve and a small mesh patch at the bottom lets water drain. The "adjustable tool bungee y-clips" were a little funky to figure out but once I did I was a fan. When cinched down they are extremely secure. Definitely one of the better designs I've seen. The ice tool holsters are secure and have a beefier fabric behind them to protect from sharp edges and points. The tool holsters are versatile enough to hold an avie shovel handle. Each side features a wand pocket that doubles as a bottle holder if you're so inclined. The ski carry loops were wide enough to easily fit my 115mm tails and carry in the a-frame style. The waist belt is removeable/stowable and features two gear loops for your alpine rack. It is about 3 inches wide and comfortable over a ski jacket and pants or over just a shirt and pants. Shoulder straps were comfy as well and shaped to stay out of the way.

Performance was strong both on the uphill and on the down. The profile is slim enough that I didn't bump my elbows when skinning or hiking. On my **Mt Hood trip** I carried a fair amount of gear and the heavy load was stable and carried well. On ski descents I was able to cinch everything down tight enough to keep it from swaying around. The combination of all the compression straps, shoulder straps, and waist belt kept it secure on my torso. I was able to ski variable snow in variable terrain without worrying about the load. The layout of everything on the pack made the process of "load skis, unload skis, get the ice axe and crampons, stow it all, etc" a relatively painless task.

Bottom Line:
The Variant 37 is awesome. It's a strong performer for ski mountaineering.

