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Osprey Xena 70 Pack

Osprey's latest pack for women puts comfort at the forefront of backcountry adventures

Traveling through the backcountry on foot can be a uniquely masochistic enterprise. What seems like a minor discomfort after an hour can easily turn into a major inconvenience, or even an injury, after several days, but even the smallest tinkering can significantly improve a backpacker's experience.

Osprey's latest design, the Xena 70, offers women several significant advantages. First, the heavily padded hip belt features Osprey's signature custom-molded cushions. The removable belt is heated in an oven at a certified Osprey dealer and then pressed into the hipbones and the base of the spine for a uniquely comfortable fit. As a well-fitting backpack is designed to carry the weight on your hips, instead of your shoulders, the extra comfort in this area prevents bruising and rubbing later on.

The Xena also offers an external sleeve for a water bladder. The sleeve is located in the pack's back panel, which eases refilling for the weary trekker and prevents leakage onto the rest of the bag's contents. Finally, the top lid converts to a lumbar pack. Simply unbuckle the top portion and remove the built-in belt from behind the ventilated lumbar panel. Two compartments easily hold enough water, food, a jacket and a map for quick side trips.

Of course, the Xena offers many other well-thought-out features. The number and variety of pockets is astounding and includes several stretchy mesh pockets for quickly stowing water bottles or extra layers; a roomy hip belt pocket for cameras, phones or GPS units and vertical zippered pockets for handy items such as sunglasses or sunblock. The shoulder straps are also heavily padded.

The Xena is currently available in two colors (blue and red) and in two sizes (70 cubic inches and 85 cubic inches). The pack can be purchased from REI and Moosejaw starting at \$319.

