



Traveler's Gear Box

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Featuring: Volt and Viva Series

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Just in time for high school graduation, or maybe even Father's Day, comes the Volt backpack from Osprey.

While this pack maker has really worked to push its designs (i.e., custom-moldable hip belts, gender-specific shoulder harnesses, top pockets that double as fanny packs), the Volt is basically slimmed-down, a minimalist backpack aimed at getting the job done without bells and whistles. That's not to say that the Volt is a second-rate or even entry-level backpack. Rather, it's a pack that's well engineered yet doesn't push the price too far.

The Volt comes in two sizes, the Volt 75 (MSRP \$199), which offers almost 4,600 cubic inches of storage capacity, and the Volt 60 (MSRP \$179) which offers 3,661 cubic inches of capacity.

Despite their somewhat Spartan approach, these packs offer all the basics when it comes to carrying your gear into the backcountry. There's a zippered sleeping bag compartment on the bottom, a top pocket for holding items such as maps, notepads, matches, etc., and a deep center compartment for storing most of your gear. More and more packs in recent years have offered zippered openings for that main compartment, and the lack of one for the Volt is a slight drawback. And yet, the lack of a zipper saves a slight bit of weight and does away with a potential weak spot, or one conducive to leakage.

There are plenty of things to like about this backpack. On the inside of the top pocket you'll find a zippered mesh pocket to hold things like your car keys, wallet, cell phone, or that MP3 player you don't want to get wet. There also are stretch mesh side pockets for carrying things like water bottles or perhaps a first-aid kit, and you'll also find a large capacity mesh pocket on the back of the pack for more stowage. Of course, the Volt packs also come with external attachment points for carrying things such as ice axes or ski or trekking poles, and you can even add one of Osprey's crampon pockets. The adjustable hip belt also has small hip pockets for more items, such as snacks or a GPS device or compass.





There is an external hydration sleeve so you don't have to worry about any leaks soaking your gear. Unfortunately, the hydration bladder is extra (MSRP \$34-\$36). That might not be an issue if you have other daypacks, or even backpacks, with bladders you can use with the Volt. Also extra is a rain cover (MSRP \$34).

The suspension system features a mesh-covered back panel for ventilation, as well as lumbar pads for cushioning. These pads also can be adjusted for your specific body type (long abdomen, short abdomen) and comfort.

The pack, which utilizes 210-denier nylon double ripstop fabric along with 600-denier poly fabric, also offers straps below the sleeping bag compartment so you can attach a sleeping pad, although there are many sleeping pads small enough to be packed inside. There also are plenty of compression straps to snug down a partially full pack as well as to offer even more stowage possibilities, such as for tent poles.

There's even a modified daisy chain -- three loops on either side of the main compartment -- for another gear-lashing possibility.

Women need not envy the Volt, as Osprey has produced a version just for them, the Viva. The Viva 65 (MSRP \$199) offers nearly 4,000 cubic inches of storage, while the Viva 50 (MSRP \$179) offers 3,051 cubic inches.

All the features offered in the Volt are offered in the Viva. However, the Viva packs feature a shoulder harness designed to fit a woman's neck, shoulders, and chest through its cut and varying thickness of padding, and the overall shape of the packs are narrower and have added depth in the right places.

Thanks to this design approach, the pack load is more proportionately supported on the hips and along the structure of the back.

