



**CLIMBING
REPORT
.COM**

ClimbingReport.com

November 2013

Featuring: Aether 60

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/k9ockcj>

OSPREY AETHER 60 BACKPACK

Osprey Aether 60 We've been testing the Osprey Aether 60 for the last few months. At first glance you can see that the Aether 60 was designed to handle a lot of adventure. Although the Aether 60 isn't heavy (4.75 lbs), the add-ons don't make it a pack for weight weenies either. That said, not everyone is or wants to be a toothbrush cutting ultra-light backpacker. For those that like some comforts, but don't want to overdo it, this may be the pack for you.

This is one of the most versatile packs I've ever used. My favorite features are the side compression straps that go through the large size pockets. This allows you to cinch down the pack or cinch down the pack and whatever is in the side pocket. We usually use the side pockets for water bottles, the tall pocket won't let even a full nalgene fall out. The pockets and compression straps would also be very useful for snow pickets, flags, tent poles and air mattresses. The side and front compression straps can also be configured for carrying skis or snowboards. We haven't had a chance to put this to the test yet, but the design looks like a good secure system. The sleeping pad straps near the bottom of the pack are kept low, while the ice axe loops are raised higher up. Great design. The two are usually combined into one system and I often have sharp picks digging into my foam pads. The elastic loops for securing the ice axe handles are also a nice design. I usually have a bit of trouble with other systems, but this one has a simple toggle that passes through the loops to open and close.

The pack is made of a durable nylon available in 3 colors, red, green and blue. The back panel is covered in soft foam blocks and is curved away from the back to provide some airflow. A tight mesh fills the gap and sits against your back to provide stability without blocking the air. This works really well on those hot summer days when your shirt normally soaks quickly with sweat. These features don't completely negate the hot back, but do a pretty good job of limiting the problem.

The lid has a large pocket on top accessed by a zipper in the back. The lid can also be removed and used as a fanny pack for summit day if you like. The straps that secure the lid extend quite far, allowing you to extend and cover the top even if you need the full length of the of the extended pack height. The interior of the pack is one main area that has a semi-attached section for a sleeping bag. You can easily attached or detach this divider based on your needs. The pack swallows up gear and stows it aware securely. A large J zip on the outside of the pack gives you access to the interior without having to rifle through the contents on top. This makes it easy to access water bottles, snacks, jackets, etc. A large stretchy mesh pocket on the back of the pack gives you a place to quickly store and retrieve rain shells and other items you want to have close at hand.





One feature that is a bit different is the hydration bladder pocket has been moved to a hidden pocket between the frame pan and pack interior. This makes it much easier to remove and insert the hydration bladder regardless of whether your pack is full or not. I've had plenty of times on long trips that required me to unpack half of my pack just to refill the hydration bladder.

Now, to address comfort level. The market is full of 60 liter backpacks, all shapes, sizes, weights and colors, but none of this means anything if it can't comfortably carry the weight. For a 60 liter pack we expect it to carry between 30-50 lbs. fairly comfortably. 50 lbs is usually a big much to carry with comfort, but in backpacking terms this is somewhat relative to the task. The shoulder straps are nicely contoured to ride high on the shoulders before curving back out to wrap around the torso. Soft fluffy padding is easily compressed under moderate weight so Osprey used a foam padding that is fairly firm and dense. The suspension is easy to adjust while hiking, making on the fly adjustments a snap and easy to dial in everything in. The hip belt pre-curved to keep hot spots from developing on your hip bones and waist. The padding seems to be the same firm padding. This allowed us to cinch the belt down pretty good to help with heavier loads. There are also handy pockets on the hip belt, nice to keep a camera ready for pictures along the trail. The volume and carry comfort are just about perfect for an overnight winter mountaineering trip or a weekend climbing trip that requires some backpacking.

I have to say that we're pretty impressed with the Osprey Aether 60 backpack. The comfort and durability of it mean this pack will be able to handle a lot of trips to the mountains, crags and tosses into pickup trucks. Make sure you pick a color you like because you'll have the Aether 60 for a long time.

www.ospreypacks.com

