



bike

May 2012

Suck It: Hydration for the Duration

Featuring: Zealot 16

Circulation: 45,273

Readership: 181,092



OSPREY ZEALOT 16 \$149 / OSPREYPACKS.COM

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS IN THE TRADE HAVE CLEARLY TAUGHT THE designers at Osprey a thing or two about making packs, because the Zealot 16—their 976-cubic-inch dump truck of a hydration pack—is the king of comfort. Go ahead, load the Zealot with 100 ounces of water, body armor, a full-face helmet, tools and any other creature comforts—the one thing you won't feel is a pain in the back.

Though Osprey packs are no longer hand-made in the U.S.A., their quality control is remarkably stringent: The company's founder and owner spends months out of every year at the factory in Vietnam to ensure that design and production standards are kept high.

The results are evident. Consider the clever weight-distributing straps, low-profile reservoir, well-ventilated shoulder harness and ridge-molded back panel. No hot spots or aching shoulders from wearing this pack.

The Zealot is also loaded with useful features, including the LidLock helmet clip—which fastens XC helmets to the outside of the pack—a removable, rollout tool pouch, a smart-phone/music-player pocket on the left shoulder strap and a magnet built into the sternum strap that secures the reservoir hose and keeps the bite valve within easy reach. The rigid-framed reservoir was also a breeze to fill and insert into a fully loaded pack. Of the packs reviewed here, the Zealot would be my top pick, though my only suggestion would be to add a few zippered pouches in the main storage compartment to help keep things organized.