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The Best Hiking Gear for Women

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Featuring: Tempest 40

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It sounds counterintuitive, but smaller hikers may not actually need to carry lighter packs, say researchers at Kansas State University. When Michael O'Shea, Ph.D. led trips, the physics professor noticed that some of the largest students struggled to carry their bags [hiking](#), while smaller students could manage a heavier load. His explanation: As a person's size increases, their strength doesn't increase proportionally. "When you're choosing how much to carry, your fitness and training is a much more important variable," he says. "You have to experiment. Start with a lightweight pack (20 to 25 pounds) and hike for an hour, see how you feel. You'll either discover you can take on more, or find your limit." For day trips, fit is less important, since you'll be carrying less. But as your pack weight increases, it becomes more and more important to get professionally fitted. These six new hiking packs, from everyday bags to multi-day backpacker packs, are designed for women's bodies, so you can carry your load comfortably.

The Osprey Tempest 40 has a narrower frame and a shoulder harness cut for a woman's neck, as well as a lower center of gravity to proportionally distribute weight along the back and hips, which helps you stay stable as you climb. Plus, an "air chimney" maximizes ventilation to keep you cool. (\$150; ospreypacks.com)

