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Innovators

Featuring: Mike Pfothenauer

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BACKPACKER

The Best New Backpacks of 2015

Innovators



Mike Pfothenauer has spent the last 40 years

thinking about carrying comfort. He founded Osprey Packs in 1974, built the first packs out of his California garage and eventually moved his family to Vietnam in 2000 to more closely monitor the design and manufacturing process. For years, he's been obsessed with ventilated suspension systems—specifically, building one that doesn't sacrifice stability or support.

"Traditional packs rely on framework, plastic sheeting, and lots of foam padding to support heavy loads," he says. "These materials are heavy, lacking in ventilation, and tend to focus the load transfer to finite zones of the body—the hips and shoulders— which creates painful pressure points."

To reduce weight and boost comfort, Pfothenauer started experimenting with high-tension, non-stretch mesh and three-dimensional geometry to allow airflow around the lumbar area and hips (not just the back). After building more than 60 prototypes, Pfothenauer oversaw the complicated manufacturing and development of new tools for quality testing (because nothing quite like this had ever been seen on the factory floor).

The end result: the AG (short for antigravity) system, which is unlike any pack we've ever carried.

