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Mountain Bike Gear: Recommended

Featuring: Syncro 3

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The Syncro 3 hydration pack was my first experience with Osprey, and I was super impressed by the smart, well-thought-out details on this pack.

The Syncro 3 is new this spring, and it fills a much-needed role in my bag repertoire: For most of my hourlong, weekday trail rides, wearing a full-on hydration pack feels like overkill. I can bring a bottle, but because I hate the feeling of fully loaded jersey pockets, I don't have a good solution for holding a tube, hand pump, mini-tool, and my phone without a bag.

The Syncro 3 is a minimalist pack designed for shorter ventures like these. It holds 1.5 liters of water, and has two small compartments—a pocket in the front that's open at the top, but taut enough to hold most flatter items securely; and built into the main compartment, a small, zippered "shove-it pocket."

Admittedly, the amount of pocket space is JUST barely enough. In the main compartment, you could fit a granola bar and a tube. For larger items like a hand pump or even a bulkier mini-tool, I used the reservoir pocket, but it works just fine, even with the reservoir filled to capacity. Keys and an iPhone fit nicely into the small, zippered pocket. When I had to de-layer during a cross-country ski day, I could stuff my lightweight down puffy into the reservoir pocket as well, as long as the water was only about half-full. In short, though, everything you'd need for a 1- to 3-hour ride will fit in the pack, albeit tightly. And the result is a very compact and lightweight pack (just 13 ounces for size S/M, claims Osprey), so you don't have to feel like you're preparing for an epic when you're just headed out on a lunch ride.

Though I might wish for just a little more wiggle room with storage, the Syncro 3's smart details more than make up for the squeeze. The plastic LidLock helmet attachment is surprisingly effective for a little elastic-and-plastic apparatus. An elastic band holds an oval-shaped plastic yoke that feeds through a vent in your helmet, and holds the helmet tight against the pack. I was impressed at how effective the LidLock apparatus was in holding the helmet secure, as well as by the plastic yoke's ability to fit through even the relatively small vents on my MET Parabellum trail helmet.

The bite valve has a nice-feeling, solid plastic core unlike the full rubber on a CamelBak hose. I loved the easy-to-employ, 180-degree on-off pivot mechanism—in contrast to the plastic valve on the CamelBak bite valve, which takes a bit of dexterity to open or shut, with the Osprey you just twist the entire valve head 180 degrees and it opens or closes. Nice and easy. I also loved the strong magnet on the bite valve that attaches it to the sternum strap and keeps the hose out of the way while you're riding (or skiing). When you unclip the sternum strap, the hose goes with it, so you don't have to undo the hose to take your pack off your back.

Another nice detail: The drinking hose detaches from the reservoir, so you can easily pull the reservoir in and out of the pack for filling and emptying—no need to feed the hose through the sleeves in the shoulder straps or try to wrangle the entire pack upside down over a sink to empty it of water. The one downside to this: The hose did detach on its own a couple of times, despite the plastic locking mechanism. But it was a quick fix to unzip the reservoir compartment and reattach the two pieces.

The AirSpeed "suspension" system is impressive, too. A curved metal frame combined with a mesh backpanel holds the pack a good 2–3 inches off your back at its max height, so that your back can breathe. This is a huge feature for a pack designed for a sport that is so notoriously sweaty.

Simple nylon straps and plastic buckles secure the pack to your waist and across your chest. Nothing fancy, but they get the job done.

The Syncro 3 comes in two sizes, S/M and M/L; and three colors, Blue Racer, Velocity Green, and Meteorite Grey.

Mountain Bike Gear

## Recommended: Osprey Syncro 3 Hydration Pack

We loved the smart details on this minimalist pack BY GLORIA LIU



Price: \$80

Info: [ospreypacks.com](http://ospreypacks.com)

