



Climbing

July 2015

Big Review: Packs a Punch

Featuring: Alpine Pocket

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PERFORMANCE

"So simple yet pure genius," one tester said after using the Alpine Pocket for spring missions in California's High Sierra. This small sack can act as a stand-alone summit pack, or with the two horizontal straps and plastic buckles, **it can be easily strapped onto the outside of a larger backpack to add three liters of storage, and then be removed for day trips.**

"This solves the issue of what pack—or packs—would be most efficient for backcountry climbing missions. I don't have to eat up precious space in my full-suspension pack with a bulky and hard-to-stuff bullet," one tester said after attempting the classic Petit Grepon in Colorado. "It carries just enough for an all-day outing in moderate conditions." Webbing-only shoulder straps aren't the most comfortable, but they easily tuck away for packing, and compression straps make even the lightest, smallest loads stable. "This is so small and low-profile that it molds to my back and I barely notice it," one tester said of climbing with the Alpine Pocket. A panel-loading zipper opens the sack about halfway, which kept the contents inside instead of 500 feet below on the ground. An outer sundries pocket, durable 210-denier ripstop nylon, and a removable framesheet round out the features. It's burly enough to use as a crampon pouch, too.

CONCLUSION

The specialized compression straps that run all the way around this two-in-one pack **make it ideal for pairing with a larger pack for a summit attempt on a backcountry mission or for using by itself on short routes where you don't need as much gear.**

BOTTOM LINE

Best for Backcountry

GEAR BIG REVIEW

Packs a Punch

5 lightweight bullet haulers that will get you to the top

BY JAKE ELLISON



CLIMBING WITH A PACK can be awkward, frustrating, and downright challenging. With that in mind, we searched far and wide to find the five best leader packs for a variety of tastes. Each of these proved pleasant to wear during a long climb, and they all feature unique designs and bells and whistles that are beneficial specifically for climbers—in addition to being bombproof. They withstood the abuses of offwidths, chimneys, sharp rock, and general mistreatment from our testers. Whether you're a minimalist who carries just enough or an overpacker who carries two of everything, we've got a top-notch bullet pack for you.

SHOTS FROM THE FIELD...



Osprey Alpine Pocket

\$35; 12 oz.; ospreypacks.com



PERFORMANCE

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BOTTOM LINE

Best for Backcountry

Free Range Stud

\$99; 16 oz.; freerangeoutfitter.com



PERFORMANCE

Although this top-loading sack has a minimalist haulbag-style design, a removable pad made of semi-rigid closed-cell foam offered support and structure for carrying heavy loads when climbing. "The foam provides a lightweight suspension system for this straightforward hauler and then pulls double duty as a small sit pad," one tester said after multi-pitch routes in Mexico and alpine ridges in Wyoming. The Stud claims 20 liters of capacity, but testers were able to get a little more volume for layers, food, water, and sundries in this pack thanks to a nylon sleeve that extends above the pack's body. An "overflow" strap kept everything in place for full loads while offering a much-needed rope-carry system. "This is the pack I take for long, technical routes when the forecast calls for a little bit of everything; it's got just enough space, weather resistance, and bulk." **Thinly padded, ergonomic shoulder straps were comfortable even after 12 hours of straight wear on a grade IV route.** "They felt snug but didn't restrict movement or breathability. I didn't even have sweat stains in 70° temps." Ultra-durable, vinyl-coated polyester in the body and a tough four-layer laminate called X-Pac in the bottom provided maximum resistance to abrasion and dragging on rock while hauling.

CONCLUSION

Take the Stud for questionable weather conditions, hauling, wearing on-route, or anytime there are chimneys or offwidths on the menu—**this was the most durable pack in the test.**

BOTTOM LINE

Haulbag Meets Daypack

