



Men's Journal

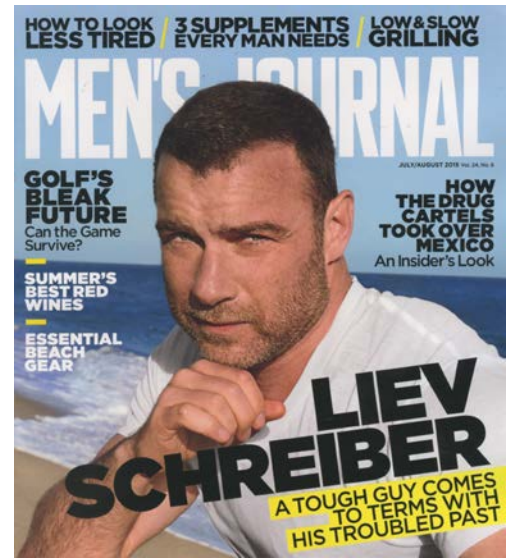
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Gear Lab: Packs for All Pursuits

Featuring: Zealot 15 – Best for Mountain Biking

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GEAR LAB

Packs for All Pursuits

These small, lightweight backpacks are comfortable and highly durable, with just enough storage for a day's activity.

by RYAN STUART



BEST FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING

Osprey Zealot 15

For one long ride, we stashed a day's worth of gear in the Zealot's main pocket and sucked water from the 3-liter bladder. On rocky descents, the pack stayed glued to our back and the hydration hose didn't bounce — it locks onto a magnet. And when we got a flat, we opened the dedicated repair sleeve, which kept our tools, spare tube, and pump organized. osprey.com **\$140**



BEST FOR URBAN COMMUTERS

Timbuk2 Especial Medio

This slim-cut pack is a good option no matter how you get to the office. Two-wheel commuters will appreciate the foam backing, which helps vent sweat but retains the bag's shape, and the adjustable waist and shoulder straps, which keep the pack sitting just right. We especially liked how it can be used as a daily carry, but if you need more storage, there's a hidden expandable area. Lots of pockets make it easy to organize gear, and the waterproof main compartment includes a laptop sleeve. timbuk2.com **\$179**



BEST FOR WATER SPORTS

Fishpond Westwater Roll Top

Like a dry bag, the Westwater's roll-top design, burly waterproof fabric, and welded construction protected our overnight camping supplies from an overturned canoe. But unlike most submersible backpacks, this one carries nicely, too. Loaded with fishing gear (including a rod attached to the side) for a hike back to a lake, the well-padded harness and waist-belt system felt almost as stable as those of a larger hiking pack. fishpondusa.com **\$150**



BEST FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Mountainsmith Spectrum

Perfect for anyone who likes to shoot on the go, the Spectrum has a dedicated, zippered DSLR compartment on the side, which meant we easily reached our camera before a bald eagle could take flight. One of a series of packs designed with input from adventure photographer Andy Mann, the Spectrum is the most everyday friendly: It has padded pockets, a 17-inch laptop sleeve, water-resistant fabric, a rain cover, and plenty of room for layers, food, and water. Plus, its casual style doesn't scream, "I'm carrying thousands of dollars in camera gear!" mountainsmith.com **\$120**



BEST FOR HIKING

Mountain Hardware Scrambler 30 OutDry

To waterproof its already-solid hiking pack, Mountain Hardware heat-laminated a barrier inside, even sealing the seams. Without a roll-top lid, the Scrambler is not plunge-proof, but after a daylong hike in a Pacific Northwest downpour, we can say it's the next best thing. The versatile design is small and light, but the pack can haul skis, ice axes, ropes, and other gear for a full day's hike. The contoured back panel was supportive and comfortable. mountainhardware.com **\$130**

