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Deuter Futura Pro 42

Air-cooled and rock-solid, this pack is a great choice for hot-weather hikes in rugged country. Our tester used it in Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains on a trek with 17-mile days and a 30-pound load, and reported he could wear it comfortably for eight hours straight and had no shifting, even while rock-hopping across the Queens River. Credit the wide, well-padded hipbelt and shoulder straps. The back-panel ventilation is effective, but it requires a concave packbag that cuts into payload space (making it best for small-load weekends or overnights). Bummer: The mesh bottle pockets are inaccessible while hiking. \$129; 2,550 cu. in.; 3 lbs. 14 oz.

JanSport Big Bear 63

When the price for a weekend pack drops toward a hundred bucks, we get skeptical. So out of the box we overloaded the Big Bear with 55 pounds of rope and water just to test the suspension system. "Comfortable and stable," wrote our tester. "It rides as well as more expensive packs of comparable weight." You need to custom bend the frame stays for a proper fit, but that's simple enough. Bonus points: The small elasticized wand pockets are easy to reach with the pack on, and secure enough for energy bars and sunglasses. Biggest downside: The capacity is oddly overstated by about 1,000 cubic inches, making it best for small-load treks. Minor downside: The packbag lacks sleeping pad straps. \$115; 3,600 cu. in.; 3 lbs. 4 oz.

Kelty Sector 46

This pack balances weight, features, and carrying ability in a smartly designed package that's great for trail hiking. Torso adjustment is easy and nearly instant, thanks to a harness yoke that slides up and down. But the system also causes some load wobble, making the Sector best for trails, not tricky terrain. Our tester praised the packbag details: "Digging out raingear was simple because of the big, U-shaped front zipper." It also has twin hipbelt pockets for sunblock and blister kits, as well as dual top lids (one is adjustable and removable, while a second, simpler lid deploys for lighter weight and smaller loads). Ultralights can easily carry three to five days of supplies. \$170; 2,800 cu. in.; 3 lbs. 9 oz.

Lafuma X Light 50+5

We all sit on our packs from time to time. Now you can do it without worrying about bursting your hydration bladder or crushing a camera. Lafuma has equipped this ultralight top-loader with a self-inflating sit pad that doubles as a backpanel. You can customize its inflation for added support, stability, and padding while carrying a load, then pull it out



JanSport Big Bear 63



Lafuma Naia 50



Kelty Sector 46



Lafuma X Light 50+5

for trailside breaks. Sounds like a gimmick, so we overloaded the X Light with 50 pounds on principle, and found it carried comfortably, especially on the back and shoulders. "It has so-so load transfer to the hipbelt," said our tester, "but stability is superb, as is freedom of motion." The hipbelt and shove-it pockets, extendable top lid, waterproof zippers, and tough wire zipper pulls are all well-designed. Downsides: You have to wrestle the inflation tube loose, and the wand pockets are too shallow. \$190; 3,350 cu. in.; 3 lbs. 4 oz.

Ladies' Luxe

Lafuma Naia 50

Flower-print design? No comment, says our tester. Performance? Awesome. "It's the most comfortable pack I've ever worn," she said after hauling 45 pounds through Utah's Caineville Badlands. "No pressure points at all, and it wraps my back nicely." Credit the gel-filled shoulder harness and hipbelt, along with softer-than-normal foam throughout. It also carries with great stability and decent load transfer. Overall, the pack's weight and abundance of pockets and features (the packbag has 10 compartments, an integral raingear, removable toiletry kits, fanny pack conversion, and a removable wallet-size