

# Backcountry

## The Gear Closet »

# Day Packs

## Four packs handle all your your stuff for the trail

This month we're tackling an old favorite—the ubiquitous day pack. It's a workhorse in my gear collection, going over hill and dale, to work, and sometimes doing special duty as an overnight pack for a fast-and-light excursion. Andrew and I put these four packs through their paces, and this is what we found:

### Black Diamond RPM

1,587 cubic inches

\$100

I must admit I ripped open the box containing the RPM with some anticipation. It just looked so cool in the pictures on the Black Diamond website that I just *knew* we'd be Best Friends Forever!! It was in fact even sexier than I'd imagined. Built for speed, not for comfort, this is the type of pack you might bring along as your summit pack, or for a massive day hike with minimal gear. The pack is cut narrow to slither through the brush, or possibly up a rock chimney, with clean lines that won't snag on much. The pack straps are modestly padded, the waist belt almost nonexistent. Still, the RPM is thoughtfully designed, with a lace-up lashing system and ice axe storage on the outside. This sturdy little number will suit scramblers, wannabe climbers, and those with an eye for eye-catching gear. —AW



**Black Diamond's RPM is a sleek, sturdy and lightweight pack perfect for scrambles and ultralight day trips.**

**Allison  
Woods &  
Andrew  
Engelson**

## Osprey Stratos 24

1,500 cubic inches

\$119

The key feature in Osprey's Stratos 24 is the AirCore suspension system. The firm mesh gives the pack some very sturdy support—as much as many overnight packs, it seems. Behind that firm mesh is an “empty space” that provides ventilation and a place to stash your hydration system. It's a cool feature, and it works very well: it hardly felt as if I was carrying much at all. And mind you, I load up my day pack. When I carry all the ten essentials, there's often not a huge difference from what I'd pack on a one-night backpack. The Stratos carried all that gear with ease. All of the drawcords and compression straps worked smoothly, and the waist strap has handy zippered pockets for your digital camera. The side pockets are generously sized, although not terribly easy to access with the pack on. This seems like a very carefully designed pack: for instance, the key clip in the top pocket is colored red so you can spot it quickly—on other packs, I've had to rummage around to find that little clip. One quibble would be that the suspension system takes up a lot of space—the pack feels a bit slim if you're trying to stuff in gear that's not particularly compressible or is oddly shaped. But overall, a very comfortable, lightweight pack for your day excursions. —AE



**The Stratos 24 from Osprey has a very sturdy suspension system and a nifty cooling system that uses an “empty space” and mesh to get airflow to your back.**

## Deuter Futura 24 SL (as tested)/Futura 28

1450 cubic inches, women's

1700 cubic inches, men's

\$105/\$99

I took the little Futura 24 for a stroll up the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River recently, and can report favorable results. When I was loading the Futura at home, I noticed it was not very roomy for its size, and oddly had a lower compartment like those seen on

many overnight packs, in that case, for sleeping bag stowage. Turns out, this is a pretty useful feature on a day pack; if designed properly, the lower compartment makes for an excellent, crush-proof lunch storage area. It would also work well for stashing wet rain gear. The Fu-



**A suspension-and-cooling system and a lower pocket for wet gear are distinctive features of the Deuter Futura 24 SL.**

tura 24 is the women's version of the Futura 28 and hugs the female form quite well, though it is definitely built for women on the smaller end of the spectrum. The trampoline-style suspension and ventilation system did a nice job of keeping the clamminess off my back. My only complaint about this pack is that there is not an obvious place to attach a pouch for a pocket camera. —AW

## Kelty Redwing 2500/2650

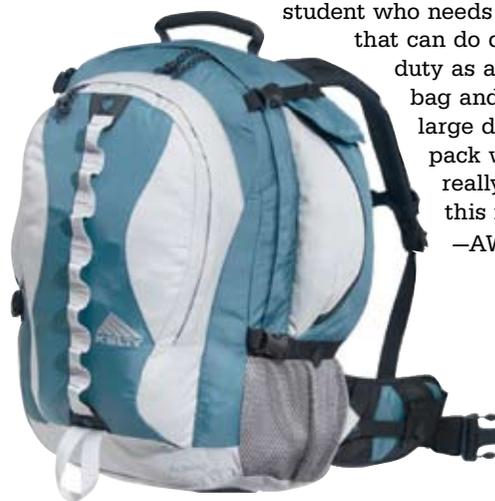
2500 cubic inches, women's

2650 cubic inches, men's

\$100

If you're inclined to bring a lot of junk with you on your day hikes, the Redwing might just be the pack for you. This old-school panel-loader might not win any beauty contests, but the rugged and roomy packbag swallows up a huge amount of stuff. Many additional outside pockets make stowing iPods and water bottles a cinch, and the burly top handle makes it easy to hoist it up on your shoulders. The pack is so roomy and voluminous that it's easy to lose things in the bottom, though the long top zipper facilitates excavation of lost items. Numerous loops and lash points allow for loading lots of stuff on the outside of the Redwing, making me wonder if a person could possibly use this for a quick overnighter. A single aluminum stay and light framesheet, plus the hydration pocket and port, make this idea within reach. The other great thing about the Redwing is that, with its no-nonsense design, it works great in town. I hauled it to my day job with me, on the bus, loaded down with tools and lunch, and it worked great for that. A

student who needs a pack that can do double duty as a book bag and a large day pack would really like this model. —AW ♦



**Roomy, rugged—but not particularly stylish, the Kelty Redwing is an old-school workhorse of a day pack. A good choice for student also looking for a pack to do double duty as a book bag.**