



£75
OSPREY
KESTREL 38

TRAILRATING *****

It's good Osprey regularly comes up with fresh ideas, so it is perhaps of no surprise to find some unique features on the Kestrel 38. Most interestingly of all is the Stow on the Go trekking poles holder system that allows poles to be attached to the shoulder strap and body of the sack in seconds, say when you need to scramble over a rocky outcrop. Also you get additional base access to the main compartment, rather than front access, which I found very useful for stashing wet waterproofs in the bottom of the sack. The back system is a unique moulded unit that allows extra airflow while ensuring a close fit. Another great feature is the hydration bladder pocket that is located outside the main compartment between the back system panel and body of the sack, which allows it to be fitted and filled without emptying the sack. A great all-round day sack.

But This feels a bit heavy compared with some, however it is made of very robust fabric and has useful extra features. You may feel the extra features are not worth having, though. Of course there are lighter and lower-priced sacks too. But not a lot wrong if you like the features.

Verdict A day sack for walkers and scramblers who like a blend of great features together with durability and comfort at a reasonable price, with the only drawback being the weight.

VITAL STATS

Capacity 38 litres
Fabric 420D nylon, 210D x 330D nylon
Features Airscape padded back system; top tensioning straps, external and internal lid pocket; compression straps; twin ice axe/pole attachment points; unique pole holder; hydration system-compatible; stretch front stash pocket; base access; removable rain cover (96g)
Weight 1575g
Made in Vietnam
Stores in the UK 14



£79
DEUTER
ACT TRAIL 32

TRAILRATING *****

It's good The ACT Trail is a nice simple sack with a few neat extras. It weighs in at 1350g, which is fine. The material is tough and the design easy to use. There is one main compartment with an additional front access panel. The lid is a single-buckle design for fast and easy closure. On the front you get a compressor mesh panel that is just the job for stowing wet gear between showers. On the side there are quick-release compression straps, allowing trekking poles to be stowed in the mesh pocket that is on one side. On the opposite side you get a zipped side pocket, which is ideal for a water bottle. The lid also has an internal and external pocket. The back system is a padded design with an airflow chimney, so there is minimal body contact for greater comfort. This is a great all-rounder that should be on most hill-walkers' short-lists.

But The front entry is not so useful when a rucksack liner is used inside the sack. Also I would prefer a deep snow-lock extension to protect the main compartment. Some rucksacks are lighter in weight and price, while others have even more elaborate airflow around the back.

Verdict A good daysack for hill-walkers looking for a little more comfort while retaining stability, simplicity and a reasonably low weight.

VITAL STATS

Capacity 32 litres
Fabric Kexlite 210, microrip nylon
Features AirContact padded back system; top tensioning straps, external and internal lid pocket, side pocket; wand pocket, compression straps, twin ice axe/pole attachment points; hydration system-compatible; removable rain cover (78g)
Weight 1350g
Made in Vietnam
Stores in the UK 20



£80
LIGHTWAVE
FASTPACK 40

TRAILRATING *****

It's good At just £80 this rucksack provides pretty much everything that most hill-walkers want. It weighs in at a respectable 1160g. The material is a little lighter than others, but it's still good and tough. To help keep rain out you get welded and taped seams so there is less need for a waterproof liner (if any need?). The main compartment also gets a good snow-lock extension. The lid is a conventional design with a good deep pocket in the top. The back system is well-padded with foam, yet it is still a simple design that you can throw on your back and forget about on the hill. The hip fins are unusual, as they have cutaway areas to reduce weight and improve the fit. The body has a set of compression straps to stabilise the load as well as stretch wand pockets to make stowing trekking poles a breeze.

But There are some sacks that are lighter with a similar design (however their prices may be higher). Other sacks have more elaborate airflow back systems that may be better in warmer weather. A single-lock closure on the lid would be even better in my view.

Verdict If you want a sack at a reasonable weight and a reasonable price with only practical features, this is ideal for the hill-walker.

VITAL STATS

Capacity 40 litres
Fabric 300D mini-ripstop polyester, 420D nylon on wear areas
Features padded back system; top tensioning straps, external and internal lid pocket, wand pockets, compression straps, twin ice axe/pole attachment points
Weight 1160g
Made in China
Stores in the UK 30

TRAIL
BEST
IN TEST



£100
CRUX
AK37

TRAILRATING *****

It's good The KISS principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid) says that unnecessary complexity should be avoided – and rucksacks are one place where this acronym should definitely be applied. Thankfully, Crux realises this, and the AK37 does exactly what a hill-walker's sack should: no more, no less. It tips the scales at a respectable 960g. The fabric is an incredibly tough blend of Kevlar and Cordura, making this ideal for long-term durability as well as short scrapes up scrambles. There are minimal seams to fray or leak, and many are seam-sealed to keep out water, while bonding rather than stitching techniques are used where possible too. The padded back system is simple but comfortable. Compression straps allow poles to be easily stowed in the stretch wand pockets. There is a snow lock extension and a big lid with a useful pocket.

But I would have made the design even simpler by using a single-clasp buckle for the lid – but that is about all I would change. Some rucksacks have airflow back systems that will be more comfortable in hot weather, while other sacks are lighter and lower in price.

Verdict Keep it Simple, Stupid and buy this sack for hill-walking and scrambling as it is ideal for the job.

VITAL STATS

Capacity 37 litres
Fabric Schoeller Keprotech (28% Kevlar, 72% Cordura)
Features padded back system; top tensioning straps, external and internal lid pocket, wand pockets, compression straps, twin ice axe/pole attachment points
Weight 960g
Made in China
Stores in the UK 36