

Priceless



Ski Packs, Zed pt II, Breathe, Ski Cutting & more

Issue LIX
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Ski Packs

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top-loader Axe
straps



Off-Piste Mag photo

Arc'teryx Khamski 38; \$299 Weight: 3 lb; Volume: 38 liter

The newly revamped Khamski 38 is a bomber ski touring pack with a technical edge that's big on volume and low on gimmicks. Its top-loading design gives it a distinctly traditional feel, while the use of waterproof urethane-coated fabric on the front and top adds a high-tech element and helps keep your gear dry. It's well sized for big days, light overnights and for those who need space for technical gear.

The overall design is relatively simple: traditional top-loading shape with floating lid and dedicated avalanche tool storage on the front panel. There's a full-length side access zip that facilitates pulling your puffy coat or other buried items from the bottom of the pack. The spacious lid holds essentials like goggles, electronics and snacks. The dedicated avy tool pocket is large enough to accommodate the gamut of shovel sizes and still provide storage space for other wet items, like skins or your snow study kit.

The fit is great and the pack comes in three sizes – small, regular and large – to match your torso. Pocket aficionados might lament the lack of hip belt pockets, but there are a couple zip pockets – one hidden in the bottom and one more accessible in the main body to help separate your stuff. You'll also find all the tech features you need to add ice axes, carry a rope or clip into a haul line.

Skiers looking for a traditional top-loader with a healthy load capacity that's not trying too hard to be different will appreciate the straightforward but versatile design of this mountain pack. If you're in the market for a bigger multi-day pack, check out the Khamski 48.

Favorite Feature: Bomber materials and a relatively simple design.

Least Favorite Feature: If you pack really light, this rig can feel floppy.



Black Diamond Alias Avalung; \$279 (\$169 w/o Avalung) Weight: 3 lb 12 oz; Volume: 35 liter

Redesigned for 2013, the new Alias offers a clean, simple design reflective of BD's alpine climbing packs but with added ski features. It's a traditional top-loader with a large main compartment, dedicated avalanche tool storage on the front panel plus a floating top lid with zippered pockets. It's available with or without the Avalung component. The Alias provides a tidy 35 liters of storage – well matched to day touring and perhaps more if you have a strong light-is-right streak.

The standout characteristic for the Alias is its minimalist styling. That's not to say the pack is short on features. First, there is the Avalung, an added piece of mind for many skiers and a feature exclusive to BD packs. Next, the pack cloth is lightweight ripstop nylon, including 210d Dyneema side panels for added durability without a weight penalty. Borrowing from their climbing pack designs, the ice axe attachments – BD pickpockets – provide secure axe storage with minimal loose straps. There's also a rope cinch strap and a top skirt to accommodate expansion.



The avalanche tool storage compartment is in line with the pack's tidy design. Shovel, probe and handle fit securely in the front zipper compartment. There's enough room for larger shovels, but not necessarily your skins. There're plenty of small details to appreciate: insulated hydration sleeve, nice pull-tab on top skirt, good buckles. We're luke-warm on the vertical zipper entry for the avy tools pocket, and the compression straps are a little finicky to keep tight when A-framing skis (female buckle end is sewn tight to pack seam) but, ultimately, the pack works well. The suspension system drops last year's pivoting hip belt in favor of a much simpler design that works great.

Looking for a clean, well-executed top-loader ski pack, look no further; BD has refined the Alias to meet the needs of skiers who prefer a lightweight, traditional loading and functional pack. It's available in two torso sizes to help dial in the fit.

Favorite Feature: Less is more with this pack's clean, simple design.

Least Favorite Feature: A-frame ski carry was finicky to keep tight.

CiloGear 30Z Ski; \$189

Weight: 2 lb 4 oz; Volume: 30 liter

Like all of CiloGear's packs, the 30Z Ski model is made in Portland, Oregon. Though not a custom pack manufacturer, CiloGear maintains an inventory of prepped pieces and parts, ready to create any one of many stock designs as soon as it's ordered. The 30Z Ski offers a design variation on the traditional top-loader; it features a zip-closure lid. Think trad top-loading shape and access with a lid that zips closed. The 30Z is a lightweight, minimalist pack with surprising versatility.

A couple of design features deserve description: First is CiloGear's unique system of configurable compression straps using a clever combination of d-rings and webbing straps with sliplocks. The design allows for an endless number of external strap configurations to accommodate various ski and snowboard carry options and load sizes. It's really quite simple, yet it's likely to appeal best to tinkerers and pack geeks.



Next is the avalanche tools pocket that's located inside and against the back of the pack. The idea for locating the tools along the back panel is to add structure to the pack using the equipment you carry rather than building a frame into the design. It's part of the reason the pack weighs a mere two pounds. The tools pocket has sleeves for your probe and shovel handle, plus plenty of space for your choice of shovel blade.

Finally, CiloGear's minimalist approach leaves a variety of features found on other packs on the drawing board, so to speak. Those looking for a clever helmet net, insulated hydration sleeve or built-in organization should look elsewhere. Those looking for high-quality and lightweight materials like 210d Dyneema side panels and burly (and waterproof) VX21 laminate fabric will appreciate this pack.

The 30Z does have a couple zippered pockets to help keep essential items handy. There's CiloGear's trademark ninja pocket, which in the 30Z doubles as the closure for the avy tool pocket, and a nice zip pocket on the underside of the lid. It's also got a clean ice axe attachment and a small hip belt pocket.

Overall, the 30Z is a tidy, minimalist pack with all the functionality you need for a day of ski touring. The pack's narrow profile, lightweight construction and minimalist design are in lockstep with the priorities of many backcountry skiers. If your style is to pack more versus less but you still value minimalism, consider the 30:30Z or even the 40Z for the same clean design but a little more space for all your stuff.

Favorite Feature: Minimalism personified.

Least Favorite Feature: Minimalism is not for everyone.

Deuter Freerider Pro 30 \$159

Weight: 4 lb; Volume: 30 liter

The Freerider Pro 30 has a couple seasons under its belt in the Deuter line. It's a classic panel loader that works as well with snowboards as it does with skis. Although the pack only has two compartments – the main body and the avalanche tools zone - Deuter includes a variety of pockets and built-in organization to help keep your gear visible and accessible.



The main body of the pack can be accessed via the standard panel zip access or a full-zip back panel that opens wide. There's also a nice fleece-lined goggle pocket, accessed from the outside, to keep smaller stuff out of the main compartment chaos. The tool area is organized with three distinct zipper pockets plus a probe/handle sleeve and plenty of space for your shovel blade. The mix of pockets served to keep my snow study kit and things like map and snack handy. There's even a couple stretch side pockets on the side panels for stuffing a hat or gloves while on the up-track.

Where this pack shines is when carrying a snowboard. The ski carry (a-frame and diagonal) works well too, but many packs carry skis well. The Freerider Pro 30 stands out for its secure and easy to adjust board attachment system. Boards put stress on a pack and it handles the stress with ease. The suspension (Deuter's Alpine VariFlex design) and hip belt padding are noticeably beefier than much of the competition. Plus, the fabric is bomber with an added PU coating in all the right places for grip and durability when carrying a board or skis. The pack has really proven to be incredibly durable – ours it's on its second season of heavy use.

The Freerider Pro is an efficient pack that's big on pockets and durability. If you like everything to have a place, you'll like this one. If you're a backcountry snowboarder, you'll like it even more.

Favorite Feature: Quality and durability.

Least Favorite Feature: Too many straps if not using snowboard system.

Exped Glissade 35; \$229

Weight: 3 lb; Volume: 35 liter

Exped is not widely known for packs here in North America, but the Glissade 35 holds its own for functional design and key features amongst a group of die-hard ski pack designs. The Glissade is a roomy, zippered panel-loader with two additional compartments – a dedicated avalanche tools area and a large, fleece-lined goggle pocket. It's one of the lighter packs included here.



Staying true to its Swiss roots, the Glissade is all business and no frills. The main compartment swallows a generous pile of gear and provides a zippered mesh pocket for small, loose items. The zipper opens halfway on one side and full-length on the other – giving decent access to the contents without letting them fully spill out. The separate tools compartment provides minimalist loops to secure a probe and shovel handle and plenty of space for a blade, your skins and snow study kit, but there're no extra sleeves or pockets to keep them organized. The ski (diagonal and A-frame) and board carry options are effective, but the A-frame set-up limits zipper access to the main compartment. There's an easy-to-use helmet carry net that hooks into the daisy chains on the pack.

The fit is good, if a little biased to medium and longer torso lengths. The light foam back panel is reinforced with two lightweight, tubular aluminum stays, which effectively stabilize a full load. Smaller details include two small but stretchy hip belt pockets and a secure clip to keep your hydration reservoir from sagging.

Overall, the Glissade 35 is a competent pack that keeps it simple. It's a big 35 liters and has just enough organization to keep your gear handy. Minimalist design means it makes a nice crossover pack for general hiking use, too. *The Glissade will be available in North America starting 3/1/14.

Favorite Feature: It's a lightweight, simple design.

Least Favorite Feature: Lacks good compression for when not fully loaded.

Gregory Targhee 32; \$179

Weight: 3 lb 12 oz; Volume: 32 liter

The 2013 Gregory Targhee 32 is a trim, streamline fitting ski pack. Its panel-loading design provides a healthy 32 liters split between the main body, a dedicated avalanche tool compartment and a separate top pocket for goggles and other small essentials. All access is via zippered openings and the pack is set-up for ski and snowboard carry – designed with modern ski dimensions in mind.



The design feature that helps set the Targhee 32 apart is its pack panel access. The zippered back panel is the only way to access the main body.

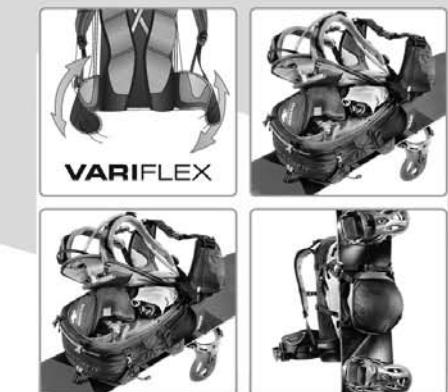
At first, this design struck us as limiting but, in reality, it works great and just took some adjustment from years of using more traditional top- and panel-loader designs. The pack's Vertflex suspension system is well matched to a flexible but supportive frame sheet to create a really secure and comfortable fit. The pack carries a load well, staying tight to your body for uninhibited movement while hiking up and skiing down.

Attention to detail is high and the overall pack design is intuitive, though some users might find it a bit feature rich. Nonetheless, the pack has a clean exterior and the various features are well executed. The helmet carry is one of the most streamlined and easy to use that we have seen. Overall, the volume will serve most day skiers well, but there's little room to expand should you wish to push into an overnight load. Gregory offers a bigger 45-liter model as well as smaller 26- and 18-liter models for those looking for more or less space.

Favorite Feature: Well thought out and executed design.

Least Favorite Feature: Snowboard parts are unnecessary extras for skiers.

continued on next page



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Ski Packs

Jones 30L; \$199

Weight: 3 lb 2 oz; Volume: 30 liter

Jones, the snowboard company founded by pro rider Jeremy Jones, may be focused on snowboards, but their 30L pack is equally as ski friendly. It's a basic panel loader designed around a main compartment and a dedicated avalanche tools area. It's fairly modest in volume but still hits the primary features with a focus on light weight and functionality.



Avalanche tools are kept in place by three sleeves – one each for probe, shovel handle and snow saw – plus plenty of room for the blade and your skins too, if you like. There're two ways to access the main body: a standard front panel zip and a full back panel opening. Inside, there's a mesh zip pocket to add some organization to normal pack disorder and a somewhat modestly sized hydration pocket that ports the hose through the insulated shoulder strap.

Of course, the pack carries a snowboard nicely, but it handles skis in A-frame or diagonal style, too. Buckles are sized big for easier gloved operation and general construction keeps weight in mind. Overall fit is good for medium and smaller skiers, but its length runs a bit short for longer torsos. The twin hip belt pockets are roomy and accessible, while the suspension system is lightweight and well matched to modest day-touring loads.

Favorite Feature: No-nonsense design.

Least Favorite Feature: It's a little small for those who have trouble packing light.

Mammut Spindrift Guide 45; \$210

Weight: 4 lb 2 oz; Volume: 45 liter

The Spindrift Guide targets users who need to carry a full load. At 45 liters, this pack has the largest capacity of the packs included here. It's also loaded with technical features to keep your gear accessible and organized. In the big picture, the Spindrift is a traditional top-loader well suited to guide loads, technical adventures and hut trips.



Mammut addresses the age-old issue of accessing buried items in a top-loader with side panel access on one side and a couple of dedicated pockets for items best kept out of the main body chaos. The avalanche tools pocket separates your rescue gear and a dedicated skin pocket on one side panel keeps your skins handy and away from your dry gear. The avy tools pocket is noticeably small for such a large pack – likely because it was designed to accomodate Mammut's shovel and probe – but we were able to fit a couple different blades and probes, just not the largest pro scoops. The skin pocket, on the other hand is a nice touch. Other good details include: expansion skirt at the top, nice ice tool holders (akin to the BD pickpockets) and good compressibility when carrying a small load.

Like other packs that offer multiple ski and board carry options, there's an array of straps and buckles on the front. The good news is they work and one of the board straps is fully removable without breaking out the scissors. Another nice detail is the pack's one-size-fits-all design that uses easily adjustable shoulder strap positioning to accommodate different torso lengths.

The Spindrift Guide is the pack for skiers who consider a rope and helmet essential day-trip gear. Of course, it fits and carries well too – loaded to the gills and pared down. Plus, you'll be the trip hero with Spindrift Guide when you're the only one with the space to haul in that last six-pack and liter of single malt. For those who need a little less volume but like the sounds of this one, look at the Spindrift Guide 35.

Favorite Feature: Big volume and cool dedicated skin pocket.

Least Favorite Feature: Small avalanche tools zone.

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volume shoulder
function
Ortovox tools
belt handle
top-loader
Black
shovel
Axe
straps
top-loader
Black

Ortovox Haute Route 35; \$179

Weight: 3 lb 7 oz; Volume: 35 liter

The Germans put some serious design time into the Haute Route 35. That's not to say the pack is full of gadgetry, just the opposite is true. It's a clean and functional backpack that provides a surprising amount of storage for its size and a comfortable, secure fit.

At first glance, the Haute Route 35 is a classic zippered panel-loader. Upon closer inspection, it features three distinct compartments: the main body accessed via a zippered back panel, avalanche tool storage accessed via its own zipper (colored red) access and a final panel pocket with internal organizers and its own zip access. The three-compartment system makes for easy organization. The smaller front pocket is not small at all and I found the built-in organizer set-up a great way to keep snow study tools ready and easy to grab, though there's also a zip pocket in the tools area for your snow kit. Other details worth noting include: clean, functional axe attachment, nice zipper pulls and hydration port (not insulated).



The pack carries well and has a nice ergonomic fit top to bottom. It accommodates A-frame and diagonal ski carry, plus it handles a snowboard without much complexity, though it was a bit floppy carrying skis when not fully loaded inside. The A-frame carry still allows access to all three zipper openings, something that several panel loaders do not. The hip belt pocket, referred to as a cell phone pocket by Ortovox - is decidedly small, but there is a nice gear loop on the right hip.

Ortovox did a great job creating organization and a good amount of storage while maintaining a clean and functional pack. The Haute Route 35 is a functional panel loader worthy of most people's full day touring loads. It carries and skis like it was designed by skiers, just like it should.

Favorite Feature: Inherent organization and easy zipper access.

Least Favorite Feature: Lack of hydration tube insulation.

Osprey Kode 42; \$170

Weight: 3 lb 14 oz; Volume: 42 liter

The Kode 42 is the flagship pack in Osprey's ski and snow line. Osprey has a reputation for designing packs that fit and carry as well as any bags in the business, and the Kode 42 does just that. It's a hybrid top-loader that adds a zippered back panel for unfettered access to your stuff. And, at 42 liters, there's plenty of space for a full day tour and then some – like the extra six-pack and burrito fixins that are sure to make the first night at the yurt more fun.



It's got everything a pack could offer: high-quality materials and workmanship, multiple access points, built-in organization pockets, dedicated avalanche tool and skin storage, generous hip belt pockets, built-in helmet carry, insulated hydration and versatile ski and snowboard carry options. Add glove friendly buckles / zipper pulls and you've got a bag that has your options covered. All of these features are delivered with only a modest amount of complexity. For the most part, the design and function is intuitive. We did find ourselves consulting the Osprey website to make sure we had it right, though.

We could rattle on about secure ski and board carry options and how well the pack handles a load, but anyone familiar with Osprey should know these guys do their design homework. You'll find burly straps and reinforced materials where needed. Despite being on the larger volume size for the packs included here, it compresses down pretty well when not fully loaded. That said. The compression straps, which serve as ski and board attachments, do inhibit zipper access. But the back panel access remains unobstructed.

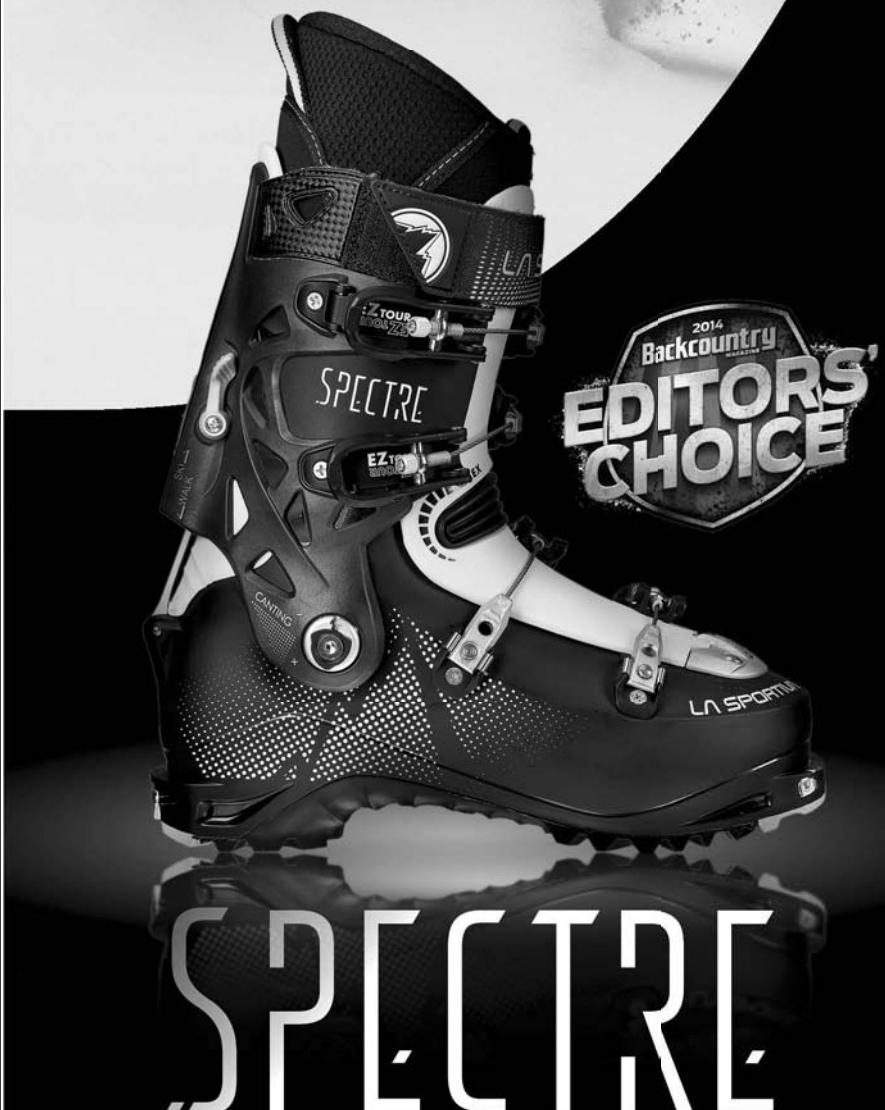
Those looking for a full day touring pack that'll happily stretch into hut trip duty should put the Kode 42 on the short list. It's a full-feature pack with great organization built into the design. Need a little less volume, but still want the features and fit, check out the Kode 32.

Favorite Feature: It's got all the features you want.

Least Favorite Feature: All the straps, buckles and zippers that come with all the features.

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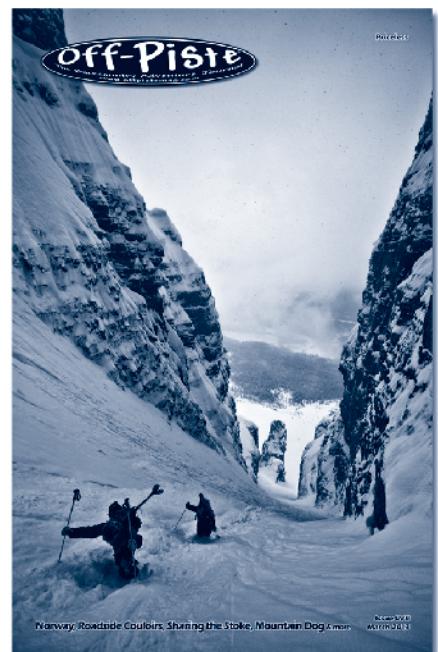
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