

REI PRODUCT INFORMATION

PACKS

QUICK TIPS

Good fit is a must: Let an REI sales specialist help fit you.

Choose a pack with a capacity suited to your usual trip length and personal gear preferences. Use our categories as a guide.

A fixed suspension can help save weight; an adjustable suspension can provide a customized fit.

FIT: THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE

For the best fit, ask an REI fit specialist to measure your torso length and waist/hip sizing. Torso length runs from the shoulders (at the upper vertebra that protrudes farthest out from the spine) to the top of the hip bone.

Options: Packs with adjustable suspension systems let you fine-tune a pack's torso fit. Fixed-suspension packs are less complex and lighter than comparable adjustable models.

Women-specific packs: These models offer shorter torso lengths, modified shoulder straps and women-specific hipbelts. Men with narrow frames often find these packs are a good fit.

BACKPACK BASICS

A pack should put most of the load where it can be efficiently carried: on your hips. Most packs have suspension systems with padded, contoured shoulder straps, load-lifter straps, a sternum strap and a padded hipbelt.

Most backpacks today use an internal frame. An internal frame's body-hugging design boosts balance and freedom of movement—great for multipurpose use (hiking in rough terrain, scrambling, mountaineering, skiing).

PACK CATEGORIES

We categorize packs by trip length, based on each pack's gear capacity and suspension system. Look at larger packs if you're a haul-it-all type; go smaller if you aim to pack light.

Some packs are available in multiple sizes. In these cases, our chart lists the specs for the regular- or medium-size model.

Extended trips: Most of these packs hold more than 70 liters (4,200 cu. in.) of gear.

They feature a substantial suspension and ample load support. They're suitable for backpacking trips of a week or more, and for spring, fall or winter travel when you may need to carry a larger assortment of clothing.

Multiday: This broad category includes packs with 40–70 liters (2,400–4,200 cu. in.) of gear capacity. They'll comfortably haul medium to moderately heavy loads; for most hikers, they make a fine choice for 2- to 5-day trips.

Technical daypacks: Designed for trail use more than school or urban duty, these packs can tote the 10 Essentials and more.

Some are set up to haul climbing tools or snowsports gear. Most offer easy access to water bottles; many include a sleeve for a hydration reservoir (usually sold separately) and an exit port for its sip tube.

Climbing: These packs have a narrow profile (for easy arm movement) and several external lash points for tools. Some offer a reinforced area for toting an ice axe or crampons.

Hydration packs: They provide hands-free drinking while hiking or biking. These packs include the reservoir, typically 2–3 liters in size. Your choice depends on the type of adventures you typically take. For instance, packs with large 3L (100 fl. oz.) reservoirs are good for long day hikes in warm weather.

GOING ULTRALIGHT

A pack is a pivotal component in an ultralight backpacking system. Its smaller capacity forces you to pack more efficiently or substitute bulkier gear with new-generation items designed for ultralight travel.

It may take a trip or two to get your gear mix just right. The payoff: freedom to go farther, faster or just lighter. Multiday packs under 4 lbs. are good ultralight choices.

KEY FEATURES

Top load or panel load: Almost all packs feature access to the main compartment at the top of the pack or via a front panel. Top-load design minimizes weight, while panel-load design offers easy access to your gear.

Top lids: These offer extended capacity, as do expansion collars. Some lids double as waistpacks for day trips from base camp.

Hydration compatibility: Some packs have a compartment for a fluid reservoir (usually sold separately) and a port for its sip tube.

Hipbelts: Comfort and adjustability are key. Many packs have pockets on the hipbelt for fast access to energy food, digital camera, GPS receiver and items of similar size.

Load support: Aluminum wands, or "stays," are commonly used to transfer the weight of the packbag to the hipbelt. Some packs use a stiff plastic (HDPE) framesheet for support. (It also shields backs from protruding items.) Other packs offer a stay/framesheet combo.

Ventilation: Newer frame designs support the load while also creating a large air chamber behind your back. The result: increased airflow that cools your back.

Motion: Some packs offer dynamic shoulder harnesses and hipbelts that readily respond to a wilderness traveler's range of movement.

ACCESSORIES

- To expand capacity, add accessory pockets.
- Some add-on pockets are sized to hold a GPS unit or camera. Some are also padded.
- Stuff sacks and mesh bags help organize items inside big compartments.
- Rain covers shelter your pack and prevent lashed-on gear from snagging on brush.
- Trekking poles help you maintain balance, let you add a little thrust when hiking uphill and ease jolts to joints during descents.

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