

Backcountry

The Gear Closet »

Do-It-All Packs

Three multi-purpose packs for day hikes or overnight trips

We all know someone who has a pack for every situation—small day pack, larger day pack, bike pack, ski pack, and a backpacking pack. For the rest of us, the idea of having one pack that can do all of these things is mighty appealing. Any of these reviewed packs should have enough capacity to take you anywhere from a dayhike to a lightweight weekend trip, as long as you pack sensibly. When deciding between these three excellent packs, go for the one that fits you the best—this is by far the most important aspect of selecting the right one for you.

Marmot Matterhorn 42

42 Liters/\$169

Marmot's new Matterhorn is the quintessential multi-purpose pack. This baby's loaded with features you'd expect, plus a few surprises. It's available in two sizes, both weighing in right around three pounds. A fine suspension system on this unisex pack features contoured shoulder straps that men and women alike will appreciate, and the waist belt hugs comfortably. Lightweight fanatics will appreciate the removable pack lid—but it's such a nice lid I wouldn't remove it. Inside there's an additional mesh pocket for small valuables. The back side of the pack features many places to lash on extra gear, including ice axes, poles or skis. Neat feature: pull out the pad that's part of the suspension system and voila! You have a 22" x 30" foam pad.



The Marmot Matterhorn 42 is a lightweight pack with a quality suspension system. It's a great pack for climbing, backcountry skiing, day hikes or short overnight trips.

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Cool Gear »



As winter melts slowly into spring, we find ourselves out in the backcountry on some *mighty* chilly days. I've recently spent many of said questionable days fly fishing in the Columbia Basin, and

Tilley 'Soft Shell' Winter Hat \$85

used this hat to keep my noggin warm. The cozy fleece liner and re-

tractable earflaps are warm and cuddly, while the Schoeller 3xDry technology keeps raindrops out, and wicks perspiration outward. A small secure pocket in the crown provides a great spot for valuables, or a heat pack on the chilliest days. The Soft Shell comes in regular hat sizes, ensuring a precise fit. If \$85 seems steep for a hat, consider this: the hat is made in Canada, and is guaranteed for life against breakage, and insured for loss, Tilley will sell you a new hat at half price if you lose yours.

—Allison Woods

Granite Gear Vapor Trail

59 Liters/\$170

The Vapor Trail is one of Granite Gear's cool lightweight offerings, but it doesn't skimp on details. Three torso lengths and interchangeable hip belts allow for a precise fit. Simple lash points on the outside (and inside, interestingly) ensure there's a place for everything. The massive snow collar allows for overstuffing and explains the pack's large carrying capacity. But don't be seduced to over-pack, as the Vapor Trail's only good to about 30 pounds. You might find the lack of a pack lid takes a bit of getting used to, but the large, very durable, stretch pockets located in the classic "water bottle" locations right behind your hips assume that duty quite well. Is the Vapor Trail a multi-sport monster? Probably not, but it has every feature any hiker could need. What's ultra-cool? This thing has a huge carrying capacity for less than two and a half pounds.

Right: Granite Gear's Vapor Trail is super lightweight—just two and a half pounds—but it has a huge carrying capacity.



Left: The Deuter 35+ Guide is a classic lightweight pack, and its low-profile lash points on the pack keep it from getting snagged on passing brush.



Deuter 35+ Guide

35 Liters/\$149

Deuter's offering is another more classic approach to the do-it-all pack. It sports a full suspension system complete with stays, a beefy (and interchangeable!) waist belt, and Deuter's excellent "Alpine Back" ventilation system. At nearly four pounds, it's the heaviest of the bunch, but I'd hazard to guess that extra weight translates into durability. There's a pair of burly ski slots, adjustable for precise fit and thoughtful ice axe/trekking pole attachment points. The pack lid (not removable, unfortunately) has a secret storage pocket on the underside for stashing valuables. Favorite thing? The numerous lash points on the outside of the pack are low profile for minimum snagage in the brush. ♦