# APRIL 2013

### [best weight-to-capacity ratio]

### **Gregory Contour 70**

Easy: make a lightweight pack Hard: make a lightweight pack that performs like a load monster. "I used the Contour on a hot, humid, six-day family backpacking trip in Oregon's Eagle Cap Wilderness, carrying up to 45 pounds of gear, extra layers, and food," reports our tester. "The more I packed, the better it carried." The pack's precise, effective compression resulted in "excellent stability," according to another tester, who deemed it "supercomfortable" after five days on the Pacific Crest Trail with 65- to 70-pound loads. The secret is a lightw

frame and hipbelt wings that pivot independ prevent the pack from shifting and throwing gives it big-load comfort and minimizes big-l added stability while humping rock-heavy lo adds our PCT hiker, who stuffed the Contour compartments with a three-person tent, old sleeping bag, inflatable down pad, and a five Testers called the Contour (and its sister pac women) "great for the thru-hiker who wants items." The front shove-it pouch holds a shell zippered pocket behind it. Tip: The integral re during a downpour, but If you leave it at hom has a waterproof, roll-top closure that turns \$299; 4 lbs. 4 oz.; 70 liters; 3 sizes each for men ar

# **More Tester Picks**

### DAYPACKS

Looking for a minimalist ski pack? For sidecount trips, the Gambler offers the next best thing to no pack at all, its stripped-down, low-profile design carries a 100-ounce hydration bladder (Included), shovel, and probe-and little else. "it's perfect for quick jaunts into avalanche-prone terrain, reports our tester. Wide, lightly-padded, insulated shoulder straps help keep a hydration tube from freezing and boost comfort and stability. \$90; 1 lb. 4 oz.; 3.3 liters; camelbak.com

Cutting ounces without sacrificing functional-Ity can be a challenge, but the Spindrift Light exceeded even our most cynical tester's expectations. The pack delivers luxe conveniences like a dedicated internal shovel pocket, loops for ice tools or ski poles, and two mesh side pockets



for skins or a thermos. It shaves ounces in fabrics and suspension design: Both are sturdy enough to



### [hero-load hauler] **REI Crestrail 70**

On a 1.200-foot sweatfest up rough trall to Cook's Mesa outside of Utah's Capitol Reef National Park, our tester loaded the Crestrall with 60 pounds of tents and kitchen gear for his daughter's youth group. "Great stability during the scrambly



# DAYPACKS

## CamelBak Gambler

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adjustment, a feature our full-figured testers appreciated. Perforated foam shoulder straps. hipbelt, and backganel keep the framesheet and suspension system light, but sufficient for 25- to 30-pound loads. \$125; 2 lbs.; 32 liters; jansport.com

### Eastern Mountain Sports Trail 35

Gear loops, straps, and exterior pockets make this pack supremely versatile. The lightly padded shoulder straps and hipbelt on the Trail 35 minimize sweaty backs. Light overnights, big-load day trips, and medium-length ski tours all fall right into this pack's wheelhouse. A flexible aluminum frame helps shift weight to your hips, but it's best for loads under 20 pounds. \$159; 3 lbs.; 35 liters; ems.com

### The North Face Casimir 36

The lightweight Casimir won't weigh you down on a short hike, but it has a spacious design that accommodates gear for the longest days. The pack maintains its alpine-



dom. With a top-loading main compartment that expands from 40 to 55 liters, the Alchemist's unusual design straddles the daynack and multiday categories. Just fold the lid down into the main bag and cinch a drawcorde; Velcro tabs hold the lid in place. And amazingly, there's almost no weight penalty for the superior versatility. \$199;

### 4 lbs.; 40 liters; eddlebauer.com

Marmot Elger 40 XT

This perennial favorite continues to evolve and Impress. The most notable change this season is a departure from a conventional lid to a U-shaped zippered flap. The new version opens up wide, which simplifies packing and retrieving gear. Easy-to-access, reinforced carabiner loops and rugged durability make the Eiger one of the est-value climbing-oriented packs we've seen. \$129; 3 lbs. 1 oz.; 40 liters; marmot.com

### Black Diamond Equipment Epic 45

Heavy gear, uneven terrain, and gusty winds can overwhelm a pack's suspension. One tester, who lugged survival essentials up Alaska's Mt. Hunter In dicey conditions and 20-mph winds, credits the

