

OUTDOORS +

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2018 B1

Choosing your pack wisely

One of the pitfalls of my chosen profession, and my outdoor lifestyle, is that I have to try just about every new outdoor related item that rolls down the pike. I call it a pitfall because storage gets to be a problem. My wife refers to my office and “room” as the “storage warehouses.”



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Truth is, most of it is my fault. I can see something in an outdoor catalog, that until I just saw it, never knew it existed, and can no longer live without it. Once I get the item, and find out it does not work, it receives a life sentence to one of the warehouses.

This is what got me thinking about packs. I have an assortment of packs that include daypacks, bug out packs, fanny packs, lumbar packs etc., etc. All of them with a purpose and all of them needed. Since I write here so often about the importance of carrying some survival gear in a daypack with you, anytime you head up in the backcountry, it seemed appropriate we discuss some options you have in a pack.

Let me start out by saying that one pack is not going to be enough. There are so many things to consider, such as how long your excursion will be; how much gear you are bringing; whether you are wearing the pack all day; and what your activity is. In my case, I enjoy a multitude of outdoor activities, and each has different requirements in a pack.

For our purposes here, this column will talk mostly about daypacks and overnights. For a long backpack trip, where you may be carrying sleeping bags, tents, and other heavy gear, the

requirements are far and away more stringent than the simple survival/daypack.

Basically, you have three options for the type of pack. These include the fanny pack, the backpack and the lumbar pack, which is a cross between the two.

I have never gotten along with a fanny pack. These packs wrap around your waist and place most of the weight on your hips. There is no support provided from the shoulders or back.

Fanny packs are fine for a trip to the mall but useless for the serious outdoor excursion. The only exception I see would be for runners and some bicyclist just wanting to carry a few small items. Fanny packs just don't have the space to carry enough survival gear for most trips.

A daypack should be able to hold somewhere between 1,200 to 2,400 cubic inches of gear. A hunter would probably want a much larger pack than someone taking day long hikes, simply because of the amount of gear needed to be packed.

Many of the better packs today are using a tensioned back panel design system. It is usually a rigid mesh panel that sits against the back and a frame that pushes the load away from your back, leaving airspace. I really like this feature during the warmer months as it allows airflow and helps prevent perspiration.

Another option to consider is a hydration bladder and built in sleeve down the straps for the drinking tube. If you choose one with a bladder, the rigid back really makes it easier to carry.

Consider the number of pockets you want on your pack. I have

tried both pockets and one large pocket, with limited success either way. All your stuff in one big pocket that you have to empty, because Murphy assures us whatever you are looking for will be on the bottom. The drawback of all the pockets is trying to remember what pocket you put something in. You will have to decide that one for yourself.

Packs are often advertised as waterproof but I have seldom found that to be the case. Some packs come with a rain cover, and if they don't, I would sure buy one separately. A rain cover sure saved my pack contents on numerous occasions.

Here are a few tips to help you properly find a pack that fits and adjust it properly:

- Start by choosing a pack that fits. A poor fit will cause you back and leg problems and you will grow to hate the thing. A properly fitted pack is a pleasure to wear all day. A properly fit backpack will have the bottom about 2 inches above your waist. Too low will cause hip pain and too high will hurt your shoulders and back. Use the shoulder straps to check for a proper fit.

- You will want to choose a pack that has a hip belt. The hip belt holds the pack in places and helps to further evenly distribute the weight. I like a hip belt that is padded and contains side pockets for small items I want close at hand.

- To properly adjust your pack, start by loosening all the straps, including the hip belt, and place over your shoulders.

- Next, buckle the hip belt and tighten it so the belt straddles your hips. The padded section of the belt should wrap the center of your waist.

- Adjust your shoulder straps next. The straps should hold the pack close to your body, but not



Here, my wife Carol, demonstrates the use of a pack cover to keep the backpack waterproof. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

carry the weight. The anchor point should be 2 inches below the top of your shoulders.

- Last thing is to attach the sternum strap. The sternum strap is an important feature I always look for. This strap should be set just above the nipple line of your chest, and draw the two shoulder straps inward without limiting the movement of your arms. I have used packs without a sternum strap and had to fight keeping the shoulder straps in place all day long. To me, a sternum strap is essential.

Choosing the proper pack is important. After you use a properly fit and adjusted pack for a few

trips, it will feel more like a part of you. If you don't see me out there on the mountain with my pack, it's probably because I am still in the warehouse looking for the “right one.” Actually, if I could get my wife to carry my pack for me better think about that one.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

CONGRATULATIONS LOU JANKOWSKY



Winner of the “Dream Big” contest
She will receive a discount on a remodeling project from SCR

Caley Surber, co owner of SCR Construction

Lou Jankowsky

**And Thank You to all the entrants
who entered the “Dream Big” contest**



CONSTRUCTION
LLC
SUPERIOR CONTRACTING AND RESTORATION

1531 Highway 50
Delta, CO 81416
scrconstructionllc.com

OWNERS: Ryan Surber - 970.312.7377 ▪ Zach Shurden - 970.250.6468