



Backpacker Gear Guide

April 2010

Packs

Featuring: The Aether 70/Ariel 65

Circulation: 348,517

Readership: 1,045,551



[heavy duty]

Osprey Aether 70/Ariel 65

When Osprey told us it was updating its stellar Aether and Ariel series, we worried it was fixing something that wasn't broken. But one tester comment is all it took for us to stop fretting: "I carried the previous Aether on Denali in 2005, and, believe me, this new model handles bulkier gear and hauls even more weight, up to 60 pounds, without an ounce hanging on my shoulders." Credit the wider packbag, a more thickly padded backpanel, and a thicker hipbelt. Testers also loved the long main-compartment zipper, which makes it easy to access any area of the pack, and the lumbar straps (not hipbelt stabilizers) that run from the lower packbag to the hipbelt. The straps focus payload onto your lower back, so you can stand up straight, instead of hunching under the weight. External features are also dialed. "I could reach the stretchy bottle pockets easily, and nothing ever fell out," says one tester. "And copious webbing let me lash on bulky items." Our Sawtooths tester sums it up best: "It's the most comfortable 60 pounds I have ever carried." Nitpick: The hipbelt stabilizer straps are difficult to adjust. **\$259; 4,200 cu. in.; 5 lbs.**

