



Crux AK47 £130

on my recent 'rucksack abuse' trips. It has a sensible big single flap buckle and is reinforced with Hyperlon type material. Very unusually some points of strain are riveted or otherwise reinforced with metal and the top flap has an unnecessary reinforcing bar across the front, all of which it probably could do without. Otherwise, in the nicest possible way, it is a Saab or Volvo in rucksack form.

Roc 35 1.5 kgs

Crux

Crux stuff is always different. It is always simple and practical. Their rucksack range is what they first became known for and in my view they are still their flagship products. The AK series goes from 37 to 70 litre models. They are all constructed from a rather advanced material combining

Cordura and Kevlar with waterproof seams. The frames are similar to flexible tent poles. They are minimalist, devoid of excess gimmicks but very strong. They are made in different back lengths and they work.

I've been using an AK 47 for more than a year (not too keen on the name in these terrorist-sensitive times though). Other models have things like removable top flaps or bigger capacity. They are bombproof and good and that's about it.

AK47 47 litres and weighs a mere 1.170 kg!

Arc'teryx

I first came across the incomprehensible name of Arc'teryx on a trip to Vancouver, Canada, where the company is based, many years ago and its great news that their radically designed and built products are now widely available in specialist shops in the UK. Arc'teryx are often the innovators of features or design approaches that become standard amongst other brands a few years later.

In my view they were the first company to really get right the design for a completely waterproof, bombproof pack; rather than being compromised by the carrying harness system they redesigned one that

worked even better. The Naos series in men's and women's models from 70-85 litres is about 2.3kgs, fully waterproof and has an outer fabric that is tougher than new let alone old boots. I can vouch for the fact that in my experience it is both Tibet and Tibetan yak proof! Naos 65 litres 2.3 kgs

Arc'teryx Naos 70 £325



Black Diamond

The Sphinx 42 litre pack from Black Diamond doesn't initially grab your attention. It is a trim shape with a moulded back and a body fabric of mid-weight Cordura type fabric. When you look more closely you would see that it is, as design should be, function creating form. It is light at 1.6kg but can be stripped down to more or less nothing. The top flap secures with a single

buckle and extra gear can be attached via simple features. It is available in different back lengths. The test model I've been using has been climbing and travelling in Mongolia, India, Bhutan and Scotland and whilst it doesn't still look quite like new, nothing has failed, not even a puncture in the fabric. I'm rather fond of it.

Sphinx 42 weight 1.6kgs



Black Diamond Sphinx 42

Packing Hints

Buy some dry bags. These are made from either pu-coated nylon with sealed seams or super lightweight silicone proofed nylon. They have a waterproof roll down closure with a two part buckle, are not very heavy but are worth their weight in gold. Some dry bags have a window so you can see what is inside. Either way a system is useful so that you know red is gloves and hat and blue is first aid and headtorch or whatever.

Rig a rack. My friend Richard Haszko always reckoned that a pack should only have an opening at the bottom because whatever he wanted was always there! If the sack doesn't have one arrange a system from which to hang things inside at the top in the same way as on your harness otherwise when you really really need that extra item it will be at the bottom.

Think ahead. If you are going to attach things to the outside try to arrange them so that you can get them out without taking your sack off. When you need your ice axe, it's usually not the best time to have to take your sack off and fiddle about with a lot of silly straps and loops.

Repairs

Sometimes, despite everything, you might need to make some repairs to your pack. It's always worth carrying a spare two-part buckle, especially hip-belt buckle, a strong needle or three and some dental floss with which to sew up the odd hole (stronger than any thread and you can get the bits of dinner out your teeth as you work!) Seam Grip and Tenacious tape can be handy for slightly smarter and more expensive repairs. Sadly my old friend the Gaffer Tape (Duct Tape) is usually not up to much when it comes to pack repairs (I tried it a few years ago after a squirrel ate a hole in my pack and stole my lunch whilst I looked on shouting from the crag above - cheeky beggar).

When you get home if a more competent job is needed or something specialised like a zip needs repairing I recommend Lancashire Sports Repairs (LSR) and Scottish Mountain Gear who both do a great job at a not-too-bad price. ☺

STOCKISTS

Aiguille	www.aiguillealpine.co.uk
Exped	www.lyon.co.uk
Berghaus	www.berghaus.com
Black Diamond	www.firstascent.co.uk
Osprey	www.ospreypacks.com
Arc'Teryx	www.bigstone.co.uk
Crux	www.crux.uk.com
POD	www.podsacs.com
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