

RIDGELINE BACK PACKS

Prices from
£45.99

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Wet Backs

Pete Wadeson gets bladdered when he looks at the new Ridgeline Hydro Day back pack system, for the thirsty hunter in the field

Hydro is a bit of a giveaway as it indicates the packs have the ability to carry liquids/water internally, as do many modern designs these days. So it's just a matter of sucking on the dispenser tube and no problems getting out and unscrewing bottles; you can even do it on the move! The Packs are manufactured from Ridgeline's own Quiet-Tex material with a PVC lining making them strong, hard wearing, silent and fully waterproof.

On yer back

The 'Compact Hydro 3L Day Pack with Bladder' is seemingly basic. It measures 17.25 x 6 x 8" wide and is pear shaped and cones with an internal/removable 2L bladder. This doesn't reduce the main stowage space because it is discreetly hidden and protected in its own Velcro, top fastened pocket, sandwiched between the back and the main internal compartment. When in place it doesn't feel uncomfortable, as the Compact has a central strengthened spine, flanked by generous padding, overlaid by external nylon mesh. This allows air to circulate around the back of the pack so you don't feel 'clammy' if just wearing lightweight clothing.

The carrying harness features un-padded shoulder straps and made from square cut 'rubber mesh' with tough, double-stitched, heavy-duty, Nylon trim with attached sections of webbing that lead out to adjustable buckles that are securely attached at the bottom rear.

Both the back packs on test use the same layout for the drinking tube, which has a pull-off rubber cover, to be secured in position as it runs down the right shoulder strap of the harness. A plastic clip holds the hose and is fixed to the upper front

section. It's adjustable so you can get the mouth piece position right, but can also be routed on to the left shoulder too, if that is better.

Warm weather option

Completing the harness is an adjustable sternum strap with snap clip buckle fastening. There's also a wide and adjustable (up to 48") waistband with the same fastener type. All webbing has captive retainer loops so any spare webbing can be tucked away so it doesn't dangle. There's also a grab handle on the top for a quick pick up.

The main compartment is accessed by two, heavy-duty zips with lengthy pull tabs. The half-length clam shell opening reveals two zip-top mesh pockets, with a clear PVC one beneath. Handy if you're travelling with wet gear stored. On the back is a captive bungee cord with toggle fastener, which allows extra, external stowage, with enough length to accommodate a small camo net...

As a warm weather, short session pack it's very useful, comfortable to wear with the bonus of a self-contained unobtrusive water supply.

Bigger brother

The Medium Hydro 30L Day Pack measures 22 x 14 x 6" at the deepest point of the crescent shaped, well-padded and fully waterproof base. It uses two heavy-duty zips



The Ridgeline Compact Hydro Day Pack comes with integral bladder so you have your self-contained, water supply



The harness on both packs offers both sternum strap and waist belt

with pull tags allowing access to the full, clam-shell main compartment. A 2L hydration bladder can be bought as an optional extra, which can be slipped into the elasticated, open-top internal rear pocket where it's secured by twin Velcro straps.

When closed, four adjustable compression straps (two per side) allow you to tailor it to suit the kit inside. On either side are open-topped mesh pockets, which are good for small and ready to use items.

The shoulder harness is wide and well-padded with D-rings and as before there are sternum and waist straps with QD buckles. There's also the obligatory grab handle on top and the whole thing offers a high level of wearer comfort and practicality.

The back is contoured, semi-rigid and extremely well padded with a mesh-lined outer. The underside has a reinforced Nylon bottom with liner so nothing will get wet when it's sitting on the ground. The inner edge of the underside has a discreet, full-length zip fastening pocket holding a Hi-Viz, orange, pull-over rain cover.

Popular or not?

An (8 X 6 ½") outer zip fastened top pocket opens to reveal a roomy lined

pouch with elasticated open top mesh pocket. Behind this is a zip fastened lined pocket. Like the smaller, 3L Day Pack there's external stowage, in this case with left and right, vertical flaps that connect by adjustable cross straps and QD buckles.

Though hydration packs have never really been that popular amongst the UK hunting fraternity, I reckon the Compact is one I'm certainly going to add for the few warm/hot weather sessions I'll have. While the 30L version is a practical, well-priced, robust and comfortable rucky in its own right, even without the Hydro facility! Both should see the Ridgeline brand name on more backs this coming year...



The Ridgeline Medium Hydro 30L Day Pack is well featured, practical and offers a good cargo capacity plus the option of the hydration system too

Detail of the 2L bladder system



{ TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS }

Compact Hydro 3L Day Pack with Bladder and Medium Hydro 30L Day Pack

£45.99 & £47.99 respectively

Optional Extra Hydration bladder £11.99

Contact: Highland Outdoors, 01858 410683 www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk

FOR
Clever system that integrates carriage with hands-free drinking

AGAINST
Not a lot

VERDICT
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Can be worn and accessed from the back and front of the body



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