

# PACK INTRODUCTION

## WHICH PACK?

Outdoor gear manufacturers have spent years refining pack harnesses and features to the point that there really is a bag for everyone and any activity. We categorise packs in to five distinct groups:

- **Daypacks** of up to 35 litres
- **Mid-sized Packs** of 35 to 50 litres
- **Walking Packs** of 50 litres plus
- **Travelling Packs** of 50 litres plus
- **Hybrid Packs** of 60 litres plus

Of course, there is some cross-over between these categories, but in general they reflect the practical needs of a pack for a particular job. For example, it is very difficult to travel on a round the world trip with a 40 litre pack – that’s hand luggage size! And it is equally impractical to take a 70 litre bushwalking pack on a daytrip.

Due to the range of body shapes and pack sizes there is no single harness design that fits all people, no matter how adjustable it may be. So you will find that pack manufacturers who want to make a ‘perfect fit’ harness must produce at least two different back lengths (they measure from the top of the hip bone to the top of the shoulder), and they may also vary in shoulder width. A ‘women’s fit’ harness is now common among all top brands - these harnesses have a slimmer shoulder harness with more contouring and a slightly shorter back length.

## DAYPACKS

Daypacks fulfil a myriad of uses like stowing gear for a day out on a trail, a packable lightweight bag for touring towns and cities, carting a laptop and files to work or college, or for active outdoors folk who need a specialist pack. In general daypacks fall into four categories, but of course there is no rule to say one bag can’t do more than one job!

There are two popular day designs; those with flip-tops which provide a weather resistant cover to the main compartment, and those with one or more zipped compartments for rapid access. We recommend a rain cover for both designs unless the pack is specifically designed to be waterproof.

**Light day trip packs** start at 15 litres and range up to 33 litres. These bags are designed to take anything from just a snack and a book to wet-weather gear, or spare clothing for a trip to the gym. Ideal for general day walkers, they tend to be comfortable mesh-covered harnesses and be made of tough materials.

**Multi-activity packs** are typically slimmer and more contoured than regular day packs, and are ideal for runners, mountain bikers and adventure racers but can also be used for a stroll. These packs tend to have ergonomic harnesses and are lightweight. Volumes range from **12 to 30 litres**.

**A pack for a day out** around town may have to accommodate gym kit or a laptop and files. Around town packs tend to have many organiser compartments, reinforced laptop sleeves and be made of robust materials. Volumes range from **20 to 28 litres**.

**A spare bag** while travelling can always come in handy when you want to wander around the sights of some far-away place. These bags have no frame, minimal padding so they can be compressed, and they take up hardly any space in your pack when not needed. Volumes range from **20 to 30 litres**.

## MID-SIZED PACKS

If you’re planning an overnight camping trip, a day walk with the kids, technical alpine day hikes (via ferrata) or an extended trek with porters or luggage service then mid-sized packs are ideal. These bags typically range from the **35 litre capacity up to 50 litre models**. Being designed to carry moderately heavy loads these packs either come in different back lengths or have harness length adjustment.

Over recent years these bags have become very popular for travellers to hot climates who want to limit themselves to carry-on luggage. We recommend taking a packable day-pack for sightseeing or for around town use.

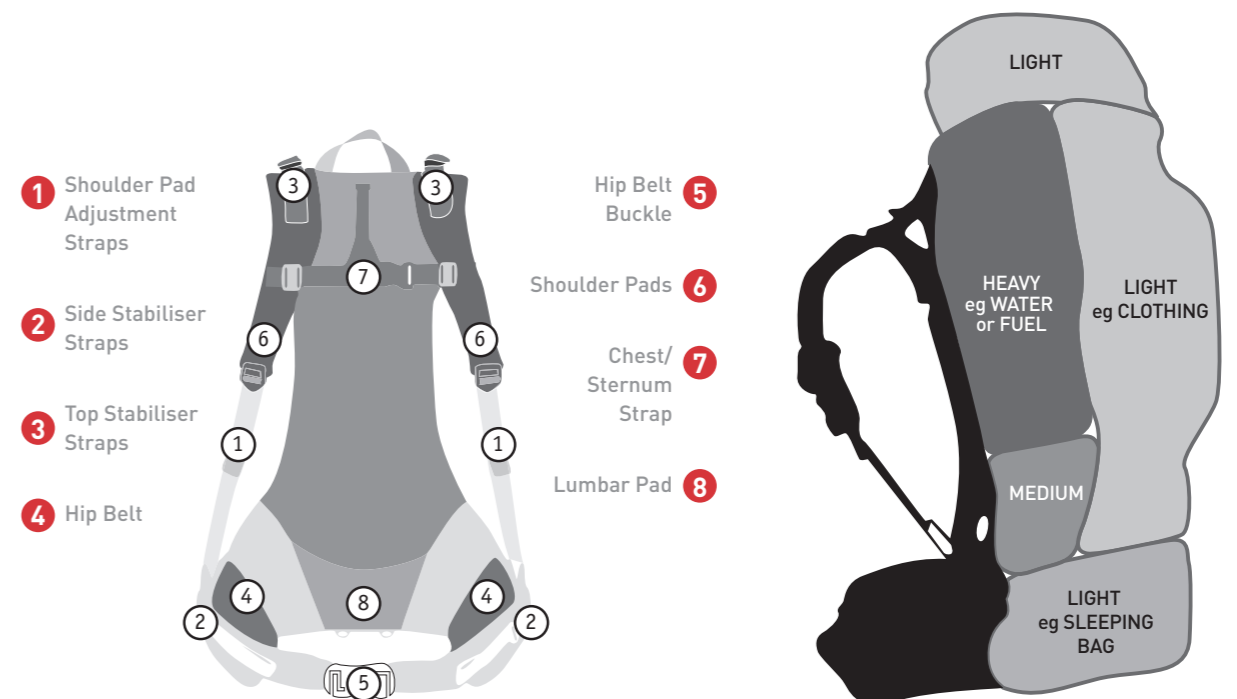
However, it is walkers and trekkers who need to carry a range of gear while out for a full day in the mountains that benefit most from this size of pack. Remember, if you’re in hot climates then suspended harnesses dramatically increase ventilation and comfort. Or for those in cool to cold climates you might need to consider the 40 litre plus models to accommodate that fleecy jacket.

# All You Need to Know

## A Good Fit, Step by Step

Begin by adjusting the harness system with no weight in the pack, then once you think the pack is as comfortable as possible put roughly your average carry weight inside the pack and try it on again. Try to distribute the weight inside the pack as you would for a trip – the idea is to make the load distribution as realistic as possible. Walk around for 10 or 20 minutes to feel how the harness performs as you move – this is the only accurate way of appraising a harness system. To adjust the harness:

- 1 Loosen the pack’s shoulder straps, top stabiliser straps and hip belt.
- 2 Lift the pack using the haul loop (never lift or move the pack with the pack harness) and slide your arms through the shoulder straps.
- 3 Bend over so that the pack sits on your spine allowing you to adjust the straps without the pack sliding down your back.
- 4 First do up the hip belt making sure that it straddles your pelvis (iliac crest) and then tighten the straps. Note that the two ends of the hip belt should not be touching, nor pushing into your stomach.
- 5 Cinch the shoulder straps so that they fit snugly (no gaps should be visible) over your collar bone – check that the top stabilisers connect with the pack about 3cm above your shoulder. The shoulder straps should not compress your spine, nor restrict your arm movement – they are there to take about 20% of the load, the hip belt takes the rest.
- 6 Adjust shoulder and hip stabiliser straps for comfort. The pack should not swing or bounce as you walk – it should remain stable over your natural centre of gravity. Make sure that the shoulder straps do not extend beneath your armpits – they will chafe if they do. Use the sternum strap to prevent the shoulder straps from slipping sideways and make sure that you do not hit your head on the pack when you look up.
- 7 Now check for comfort by moving around. Walk up and down stairs, crouch down, hop from spot to spot, and move your arms about – make sure that the harness is not causing any irritation or overly restricting movement.



## PACK INTRODUCTION

### WALKING PACKS

Walking packs are designed to carry heavy loads (between fifteen and twenty five kilos) over long distances and rough terrain. It is **critical that your pack fits perfectly**, has adequate room to pack all the necessary gear, and be robust enough to cope with the elements.

All walking packs are designed not to extend beyond your shoulder width as this allows easier progress through bush and scrub. So, to increase volumes they extend upwards behind your head – ideally you don't want a load to extend above your head. This means that **walking packs have a slim, contoured design** which allows you to have complete control over load distribution.

Many walking packs have two compartments for ease of access and better load distribution - having a compartment separator stops everything from sliding down to the bottom of the bag. A second compartment is also handy if you want to use your pack travelling when you can separate overnight necessities from general gear. However, single compartment bags tend to be lighter and more weather resistant (less zips and seams). It can be tough trying to work out which size you need, so here is a general guide:

**50 to 60 litres** — When walking within a group these packs are ideal for **trips up to 4 days** (includes carrying tent, stove, food and fuel). If you are solo then you'll be lucky to get a few days worth of kit inside the bag. Can carry loads between **15 and 20 kilos**.

**60 to 75 litres** — The most popular size of walking pack. When walking within a group these packs are ideal for **trips up to 7 days** (includes carrying tent, stove, food and fuel). If you are solo then you'll be lucky to get 7 days worth of kit inside the bag. Ideal for carrying loads between **17 and 22 kilos**.

**75 litres plus** — These packs are for long hauls and expeditions of **7 days or more**. Designed to carry loads of **over 20 kilos** these packs are not for the faint hearted!

### TRAVEL PACKS

Travel packs are all about carrying a **convenient load while on the road**. Due to their size and volume nearly all travel packs have some sort of adjustable harness, and choosing a pack that fits perfectly is just as important as ever - the last thing you need is a pack that makes your back sore and makes travelling a slog.

As you are most commonly only **allowed to take 20 kilos as check-in luggage** it is almost certain that the bag will, at some point, weigh 20kg. So when you try on different models get the staff to put 15 to 20kg in the pack - only then will you know if the harness fits you correctly.

Pack design should always be related to the intended use, so travel packs fall into two categories:

- Business or urban travellers who need to keep clothing fairly neat and tidy.
- Casual backpackers and travellers who want lightweight convenience.

Travel packs for business and urban travellers have some sort of **panel reinforcing within the bag** which provides the same sort of gear protection as a suitcase. These bags might have wheels and only a simple harness or as in the Mont Astro, the pack may be a 'clam' design with a fully adjustable harness.

Casual backpackers tend not to need un-creased clothing, so **soft-sided packs which are lighter** to carry tend to be the ideal. These bags tend to be simpler in design as internal pockets and compartments both add weight and cost.

All travel packs offer some similar features; a **built-in cover** to protect the harness when it is not being used, a **detachable daypack** for sightseeing or day trips, front access to the main compartment for easy loading, sturdy lockable zips, side carry handles and internal compression straps to stop your gear from sliding around.

### HYBRID PACKS

Hybrids provide the international trekker and bushwalker with the **load carrying ability** of a walking pack, **and the convenience** of a travel pack. These bags are typically a little heavier than a regular walking pack, but that's because they're jammed full of features which are designed to make life easier both in the field and while travelling.

All hybrids should look somewhat like a walking pack in general design and this means that hybrids have the same load carrying comfort as walking packs. However, they also boast most of the same features as a travel pack; harness cover, detachable daypack, front access to the main compartment (and a separate bottom compartment), lockable zips, side carry handles and internal compression straps.

Hybrids also tend to be a little larger than travel packs as manufacturers assume you may need to pack a tent, stove, food and general camping gear. Although heavier than a dedicated walking pack, **hybrids are great for adventure travellers** who want to experience the thrills of urbane travel before wandering off in to the wilderness now and again.

## WALKING PACKS



### KEY FEATURES

- Slim contoured shape for walking through bush and scrub
- Volume extension under lid for tent rope
- Highly durable and weather-resistant construction
- Very stable load distribution for carrying heavy loads.

*Designed to carry heavy loads between fifteen and twenty five kilos, over long distances and rough terrain.*

## TRAVEL PACKS



### KEY FEATURES

- Broad shape for easy packing
- Simple exterior to avoid snagging on carousels, etc
- Large front and bottom access for convenience
- Detachable daypack for around town
- Harness cover for protection when not in use.

*Designed for easy access and comfortably carrying a load of fifteen to twenty kilos while on the road.*

## HYBRID PACKS



### KEY FEATURES

- Slim contoured shape for walking through bush and scrub
- Volume extension under lid
- Top, front and bottom access for convenience
- Detachable daypack for around town
- Harness cover for protection when not in use
- Good for carrying heavy loads

*Great for adventure travellers who want the load carrying ability of a walking pack and convenience of a travel pack.*