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Featuring: The Mutant 38

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I seem to have an obsession with packs. That being said, it seems that a lot of packs aren't all that great, instead marketed to the masses who don't really know better and will buy whatever the sales rep at the local gear shop tells them to. Every now and then, however, you come across a great pack that actually does what it's supposed to, and in that category I would put the Osprey Mutant 38, loaded with features designed specifically for climbers.

I've been using this pack since last August for everything from casual cragging, to full on sport development, to ice climbing. It has held up to the abuse rather well, minus a puncture in the bottom that nothing outside of a haulbag could have withstood. As far as carrying capacity, it's listed at 35L, but the floating lid allows it to be expanded to 48L, and it felt like it held significantly more than my Black Diamond Sphinx 45L. This is one of the few climbing packs that I feel can carry everything I need for a day at the crag, plus a rope on top. The outer fabric is durable but light, and the pack's shape makes it easy to pile stuff into it. There's an inside pocket for a hydration bladder, as well as ice axe loops, and 3 haul points should you be bringing it up on a route with you. The hip belt is designed so that you can wear it climbing and rack gear on it, or clip it out of the way so it doesn't interfere with your harness. And there's also a removable bivy pad that's part of the back panel. The top lid is removable if you are trying to strip the pack down to a bare minimum.

All joking aside, this is a very worthy climbing pack. For cold weather pursuits it seemed to have a few quirks, but for rock climbing, it's a great bag. If they add a better way to carry a helmet, it would be a contender for one of the best out there.