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Gear News

Featuring: The Viper 4

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Due on sale early in 2011, the Viper range with capacities of between 4 and 13 litres and the Verve - the women's-specific version - are slimmed-down, simplified additions to Osprey's range of Hydraulics hydration packs.

The Viper 4, minus the reservoir which comes with it, weighs around 420g and is a simple beast. The back system uses a flexible plate coupled with a thin layer of mesh-covered foam and the reservoir compartment is under pressure, but the tensioning arrangement is simpler with a press-stud closure rather than two snap-buckles.

There's a small zipped pocket for valuables but everything else has to share space with the reservoir. You can use a 3-litre one, we do, but that reduces storage for other items. There's extra storage from a shock-corded accessory patch on the back of the pack though and the series all come with Osprey's Lid Lock, a neat plate that goes through a helmet vent and holds it in place. There's a little gel pocket on the shoulder strap too.

The pack has Osprey's characteristic feel of quality and the grey fabric is tough, heavy duty stuff that feels like it'll last for ages. The Hydraulics bladder's stiffened back makes one-handed filling a cinch, reduces barrelling when full and helps it slide easily into place in the pack.

The nice thing about the Viper is that you're getting all the pros of the Hydraulics reservoir which is great for racers and weight weenies and the reservoir works just as well on these slimmed-down packs. The pack also feels softer against the back than the Raptor 10 we've been using.

