



MacWorld.com

October 29, 2010

Review

Featuring: The Flare

Monthly Traffic: 799,341

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/27rblej>

Osprey's Flare offers the advantages of a bag designed for the great outdoors, while still addressing the needs of the urban warrior. If you find yourself frequently straddling these two worlds, this bag might make the journey between them more enjoyable.

The Flare covers the basics pretty well, with a handful of pockets for accessories, an MP3 pocket and hole for running your headphones, and a laptop pocket that seems to be designed for a 13-inch MacBook, but handles my 15-inch just fine. The bag comes in three colors: Carbon Gray, Ember Orange, and Limestone Tan. The pack also features some perks, including a document pocket that's perfect for an iPad (though admittedly a little light on padding since it wasn't designed to transport an iPad), a convenient key hook in the front storage area, and pockets for water bottles or other stashables on either side. There is also a front mesh pocket to store a light shell and a dedicated "blinker light attachment" hook on the front for any cyclists in the audience.

I commuted around town with the Flare by foot, train, and bike, and came to really like it. Osprey's experience with the outdoorsy crowd is evident in the bag's smart design: It's a light, comfortable pack that fits well and features a useful pocket arrangement. Still, even though there is a large catch-all pocket near the top of the main storage area, I found myself wishing for one or two more small, dedicated pockets for things like my iPad stand and Mophie iPhone 4 battery case. Outdoorsy bags are often designed to bend and stretch to the whims of all the oddly shaped things that users stuff into them. But this construction means that the bag can slump over from the weight of a gadget put in the wrong pocket.

The drawbacks of flexibility aside, this is one of the most comfortable notebook packs I've reviewed in a long time. Osprey knows how to design a bag for carrying extras, yet restrain itself from adding enough storage space to accommodate a small child. Additions like water bottle pockets, a hook for lights, and a document pocket also reaffirm Osprey's attention to its dual-world audience. If you're looking for a light, feature-rich pack that you can take to work and then unload and take to the woods, the Osprey Flare is a great option.

