



Deuter Superbike 18 EXP

Price: £69.99
 From: Jim Walker
 Capacity: 22L
 Bladder included? No

Instead of using compression straps, the designers of the Deuter Superbike have opted to use a zip around the perimeter of the pack that unzips to expand the main chamber from 18L to 22L capacity. Although this does mean you can't cinch the pack down to less than 18L, if you're only carrying a modest load, it does give the pack a sleek appearance and there are no compression straps to negotiate when opening and closing the pack. The pack has a built-in, pull-out 'Windshield' half-gilet that initially feels like a silly gimmick but it does actually come in useful. Always having a windproof layer available on demand is great actually; it's one less item of clothing to remember to take. There's also a rain cover in a zipped pocket underneath the pack. The foam insert to the back panel can be removed to either save weight or to act as a cushion to sit on during extended rest stops. The main storage chamber is also where a sleeve pocket for a bladder resides, which does make it faffy to install/remove when the pack is loaded with cargo. The front pocket is on the small side with minimal compartmentalisation. Thankfully the zipped mesh pockets on the waistband do a great job of storing frequently accessed items. There are two elastic mesh side pockets as well. The stashable helmet carrier netting can also double as somewhere to stow a jacket. The absence of any fleece-lined pocket will put some people off too. The 'Airstripes' two-column padding on the back panel offers exceptional breathability at the expense of always being aware of having two columns of firm foam pressed against your back. The shoulder straps are chunky, fairly stiff affairs that smaller people may find uncomfortable.

Overall: This pack has some great, unique features but we found it a bit lacking in comfort and missing a couple of features that mountain biker's find useful (a stowaway pocket and a fleece lined glasses/phone/iPod pocket).



Deuter Trans Alpine 30

Price: £74.99
 From: Jim Walker
 Capacity: 30L
 Bladder included? No

Unlike a lot of 30L packs with 'Trans' or 'Alpine' in the name, this pack has been specifically designed for mountain biking. One tell-tale sign of this is the neoprene-sided helmet carrier that can accept XC and DH helmets. It's not a light-weight pack, but is made from water and filth-resistant ballistic nylon. The main chamber holds a lot of stuff but can be cinched down nicely with four compression straps if you aren't carrying a full load. Inside the main chamber is an open pouch pocket and a sleeve pocket for a bladder - getting a bladder in or out of there when the pack is loaded can be awkward. Inside the main chamber are various international emergency services' phone numbers and how to signal for help. Hopefully you'll never use this info but it's good to have. The front pocket is very similar to the Superbike pack: small with minimal compartmentalisation. Thankfully the large zipped mesh pockets on the waistband do the job of carrying various handy items. The Trans Alpine also sports the same press studded zips and removable foam insert 'cushion' of the Superbike. The two elastic mesh side pockets are relatively large as well. There's a generous pocket at the bottom of the pack for storing wet/stinky clothing away from the rest of your stuff. The 'ceiling' of this pocket can also be unzipped allowing you access to the bottom of the main chamber. The pack's rain cover sits in a zipped pocket underneath the pack. The back panel has the same 'Airstripes' padding as on the Superbike. Surprisingly it felt much more comfortable on this larger pack and the airiness it offers was very noticeable. The chunky shoulder straps also worked well with this large pack (women or smaller men should look at the scaled-down 'SL' version of this pack).

Overall: An extremely well made pack that can carry a lot of stuff and take a lot of varied use (and abuse). It's no flyweight, but it's not intended to be. This is a bag for life.