

An impressive rucksack: but did the pump-action lumbar pad do its job?



## Lowe Alpine TFX Summit 65+15 | £200

Could this pump-action gadget give you the best-fitting backpack ever?

Let's face it, folks, each and every one of us is a different size and shape. So expecting one rucksack to fit us all is about as likely as being able to pack a rucksack for a week of walking that weighs less than 5kg. Yet one manufacturer hopes to change that perception.

For the first time, Lowe Alpine has released a rucksack that can be moulded to your body shape while you are wearing it. All you have to do is pump it up and the padding expands to fit your body, no matter what shape it is. Sounds fantastic, doesn't it? But does it actually work? I took a trip to the Kendal offices of Lowe Alpine to get acquainted with this latest innovation in backpacking.

Firstly, my back length was measured and the rucksack's back length was adjusted accordingly. Then I put it on and the hip and shoulder straps were also adjusted. This was incredibly simple and it is this that I really appreciated. The unique feature of this 'sack is the Torso Fit back system which allows you to alter the lumbar pad to suit

your own back profile. You pump up a hipbelt bulb to feel the increased size of the lumbar pad, or hold it pressed in to release the pressure.

I'm a cynical sort of chap these days, having seen enough 'life-changing' ideas to make me wonder why I am still having to wear a rucksack at all. Surely there must be a better method of hauling gear across the mountains by now! So I loaded the pack with tents and sleeping bags and went for a wander across the Lakeland fells.

What I instantly noticed was that this 'sack is simple, clutter-free and effective. Better still, it felt great on my back, without hindering my movement. But what about that air-filled lumbar pad? It certainly added some extra support and provided a closer fit around the lumbar area. Did I really need it, though? I'm not exactly sure. However, that may just be down to my square body shape. It might make more of a difference support-wise to people with more of a curve in the small of their back. So for me, while it was an interesting feature, it didn't feel that different to

a standard 'sack. But if your figure is more curvy I would definitely recommend a try.

However, I was really impressed with the rest of the rucksack. I loved the attention to detail, the huge lid pocket, the extended mitt-friendly zip pullers and combination of wand pockets and compression straps. This is an incredibly comfortable rucksack with an equally impressive set of features. It is superb for hard backpacking, carrying loads around 20kg. And if you don't need the most durable fabrics, do check out the other packs in the range that lack the pump-action lumbar pad, as they are lower in weight and price. That said, if you are having trouble getting a great fit, or if you want the most durable fabrics, then the TFX Summit 65+15 could be perfect pack for any serious backpacker.

Clearly, there is still a need for a wide range of rucksacks to suit our various shapes, sizes and needs. And when a 'sack is loaded up for a week of backpacking, it's still going to be heavy... until Lowe Alpine comes up with an even better idea!

### FACTS

**Price** £200

**Capacity** 65-80 litres

**Fabric** NHC330 ripstop nylon, N630 nylon, Ballistic

**Features** TFX Torso Fit back system incl. Torso Micro Adjust Lumbar Pad; twin main compartments; side compression straps; extending lid converts to bum bag; hydration system-compatible; harness GPS pocket; rain cover

**Weight** 3220g

**Made in** Vietnam

unique pump-action lumbar pad; built for carrying big loads over long distances; exceptionally durable fabrics; superb fit; wonderfully comfortable

some 'sacks in the Lowe Alpine range of this capacity are lighter; you may not benefit from the lumbar pad if the pack actually fits you in this area anyway

superb pack for those who need durability along with the best fit and comfort adjustment around the lumbar region

**Stockist details** - tel. (01539) 740840; www.lowealpine.co.uk