



By Kit J. Vercella

Aerostich Ortlieb Waterproof 5-Liter Hip Pack 2

A TACIT COMPLIMENT TO A PRODUCT'S quality and versatility is its popularity among diverse user groups. To its credit, Ortlieb seems to enjoy such a reputation. The company's rugged and waterproof gear appears to have garnered a loyal following among motorcyclists, fishermen (aka fishers, to be more politically correct), backpackers, photographers, touring cyclists and other enthusiasts who recreate in potentially adverse conditions.

Although we as motorcyclists might be familiar with Ortlieb's waterproof sidebags and duffle bags, I suspect that most of us are unaware that the company makes a state-of-the-art hip pouch as well; namely, the Hip Pack 2.

Just so you don't think that Ortlieb decided to quickly cobble together a hip pouch from the scrap pile left over from its sidebag production, the Hip Pack 2 was the winner of the 2010 OutDoor Industry Award in Friedrichshafen, Germany. This is an international trade show which attracts trade reps from 72 countries.

Let's begin with a clean slate. The German-made Hip Pack 2 is not your run-o'-the-mill zippered nylon pouch sewn onto a 1-inch nylon strap with a buckle on the ends. Instead, it's a new design effort targeting outdoor enthusiasts who demand a waterproof, rugged and comfortable product.

Many of us motorcyclists ride with a hip pouch or carry one for off-bike use; the Hip Pack 2 is one of the best that I have seen thus far. The pouch itself, measuring about 9" x 11" x 3", is essentially the same "river bag" design used on Ortlieb's soft sidebags and duffle bags. Unlike most hip pouches that use a perimeter zipper, the Hip Pack 2 has a roll-top closure with snap buckles and compression straps. Simply roll the top opening down at least three turns, snap the

two end buckles, cinch the compression straps and you have a secure, dustproof and waterproof pouch.

The fabric itself is completely waterproof thanks to a thermoplastic coating on the inside and 3-D high-frequency welding of the seams (which is preferable to either sewn or glued seams). The fabric is also highly tear-resistant.

In addition to the main pouch, there is a zippered neoprene outer pocket on the front. Although not waterproof, the neoprene dries rapidly. Since this pocket is attached to the main pouch with nylon straps on the top and bottom, a lightweight jacket or shirt can be carried between the main pouch and the neoprene pocket—a nice bonus feature.

Since we are talking about pockets, there are two mesh water bottle pockets with tensioning cords attached to the waistbelt, as well as two small zippered mesh pockets for odds 'n' ends. In addition, there is a removable zippered inside pouch held in place with a hook-and-loop strip.

The waistbelt on the Hip Pack 2 is also a design departure from those found on most hip pouches. Rather than just a simple nylon strap with a snap buckle, this waistbelt is purpose-designed. The belt itself is about 4-1/2" wide with light padding along the top and bottom perimeter.

Attached with hook-and-loop fasteners on the inside back of the waistbelt is a 5-1/2" x 4-1/2" x 1/2" thick mesh-covered foam pad. In conjunction with the two mesh pockets on the sides of the waistbelt, this allows for a flow of air underneath the belt. Of course, the waistbelt is adjustable.

As one would expect with any waist pouch, the Hip Pack 2 can be carried in front or back. But considering its relative size and the likelihood that many riders would wear it while riding, the Hip Pack 2



would probably be worn on the back of your waist. As a feature popular with cyclists, a small nylon loop is sewn onto the outside neoprene pocket to which to attach a battery-powered LED strobe light. As a side note: if you ride after dusk, consider one of these slick little lights. They're small, lightweight and inexpensive and really increase your conspicuity. But I digress.

I found the Hip Pack 2 to be thoughtfully

designed, well-built and lightweight (at about 17 oz.). The wide, padded waistbelt proved its worth when I was carrying a pouch full of stuff, including my lunch and a light windbreaker. The weight was evenly distributed and the pouch itself didn't sag. In my opinion, this waist pouch raises the bar for both quality and functionality.

But since the Hip Pack 2 is larger than many hip pouches and has a waistbelt that is certainly bulkier, it won't be as packable on a motorcycle compared to the typical thin nylon pouch. That is, of course, if you plan to carry it in your tank bag.

The Hip Pack 2 is available in two colors: green/gray and slate/gray for \$115. Warranty is for 5 years. To order or for more information, contact Aerostich/RiderWearhouse, 8 South 18 Ave. West, Duluth, MN 55806, www.aerostich.com, products@aerostich.com, 800-222-1994, 218-722-1927.



If your preference leans toward a more compact and traditional hip pouch, you might want to consider the Aero Banana Pack. The Banana Pack is fashioned along the lines of most hip pouches. If all you need is a small pouch to carry your wallet, bike keys, loose change and the like, this li'l guy should fit the bill. However, in my opinion, two things set it apart from its rivals sold at the big box stores. The material is a mid-weight Cordura®, which will add to its durability. And a zipper near the bottom seam of the pouch allows you to expand it if necessary. This is similar to an expandable tank bag. The Aero Banana Pack is available in black and sells for \$32. ☺