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Field Test

GEAR PICKS AND TIPS

DRINK
TO THAT



A tester takes the Roving Blue O-Pen purifier (page 38) for a spin in Spain's Pyrenees range.

Find the right water-treatment system for every trip and budget with the best new filtration products. Plus: Dress your dog for the trail, stay cozy in a versatile fleece, and more.

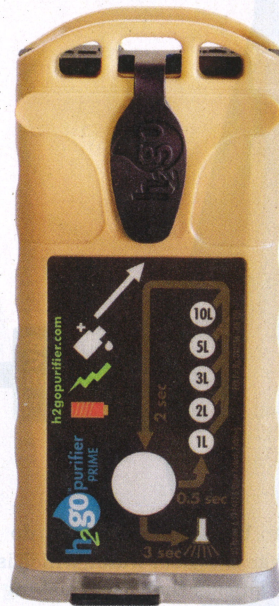


BEST FOR BAD WATER
LifeSaver Liberty

\$100; 15 oz.; 2,000-liter life span;
iconlifesaver.com

OUR TAKE When turbid, contaminated water is your only option, you can rely on the Liberty. It's the only filter here that removes viruses (thanks to its 0.015-micron pore size), and it's the only purifier here that doesn't require prefiltering if you want clear water. Though it's bulky (about the size of an insulated 20-ounce bottle), this hollow-fiber pump filter is lighter than similar devices at just 15 ounces (and cheaper, too). An activated carbon disc neutralizes bad taste while reducing extra contaminants, like lead. The small pore size means the Liberty is prone to clogging, but field cleaning only requires filling the bottle half way with clean water and giving it a good shake. It treats 1 liter of water in 1 minute, 30 seconds. Bonus: The filter cartridge is replaceable (\$40), so you don't have to buy a whole new bottle when its life runs out.

TRAIL CRED "The Liberty's housing is really durable," one tester says. "It fell out of my pack and tumbled down a rocky slope while I was scrambling in Montana's Beartooth Mountains, but came out with hardly a scratch."



MOST EFFICIENT
H2GO Purifier PRIME

\$99; 3.8 oz.; 60,000-liter life span;
aquaresearchllc.com

OUR TAKE This device is more fun than a kid's chemistry set. Use water and salt (provide your own) to make a saline solution, add it to the PRIME, wait for a chemical reaction to create a chlorine blend, add it to a bottle of untreated water (clear or turbid), shake, then wait 30 minutes. While it requires more steps than usual, the device is great for treating large amounts of water at once, and gets rid of both bacteria and viruses. It takes 15 seconds to make enough solution for 1 liter of water, and 5 minutes for 10 liters. The granola bar-size device has a solar panel that helps recharge the battery (fully charged after 24 hours of sunlight, or in four hours with a USB cable). And the PRIME is rated for 150 liters per charge, tops among electric devices in the lineup. Downside: Treated water has a noticeable residual chlorine taste.

TRAIL CRED "While it's not the simplest method, I loved being able to purify large quantities of water, sometimes 10 liters at once, without pumping or otherwise exerting myself," one tester said after a trip to Washington's Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.



LIGHTEST
Roving Blue O-Pen

\$149; 1.2 oz.; 60,000-liter life span;
rovingblue.com

OUR TAKE If James Bond ever needed to purify water, this is what he'd pull from his tux. It's the first portable purifier we've seen that uses ozone, which kills bacteria and viruses, and has the added benefit of neutralizing taste. When activated, the electronic device produces miniscule bubbles of ozone that disperse into the water. It turned stagnant pond water from Colorado's Never Summer Wilderness into tasteless drinking water with just a few swirls (our tester filtered particulates through a coffee filter first, though). The O-Pen takes about 2 minutes, or four of the pen's 30-second cycles, to purify 1 liter. Each cycle is good for 8 ounces; just push the button and stir. Bummer: The button end is protected by a flimsy plastic cap that's easy to lose, and getting water in the housing fries the controls. (You're not supposed to fully submerge the device, but accidents happen.)

TRAIL CRED "On the Continental Divide Trail outside Steamboat, Colorado, temperatures dropped into the 30s at night, but the O-Pen's charge lasted all weekend," reports our Editor-in-Chief.

FILTER VS. PURIFIER

Understand the difference between water treatment methods: If a product is labeled as a filter, that generally means it weeds out sediment, bacteria, and protozoa (like giardia), but it won't protect against viruses. Products labeled as purifiers—like the SteriPEN, O-Pen, and Purifier PRIME—will block or kill viruses, as well as bacteria and protozoa. Adventuring stateside? A filter will suffice. Traveling internationally? Play it safe and carry a purifier, especially in developing areas of the world.