

### TRANSPORT MADE EASY

In the course of slope soaring activity a degree of effort is often required to walk to the edge of the hillside. Reaching the top of any type of slope is a challenge at the best of times but when loaded with heavy ballistic hardware it becomes a weary prospect for even the fittest model aviators. If you're impaired by physical issues such as a bad back or shattered knee joints then the very thought of the pain that you know is in store can be enough to dissuade you from even attempting the challenge. Older and less energetic than I once was I now find myself in this category, so have been looking for a means to reduce the burden.

German publication Aufwind is a specialist magazine for the silent flight scene and staring out at me in the latest edition was a photo of my transportation solution, the new Sport Klemm heavy-duty, model-carrying backpack, Bambino.

I've seen many variations on the design, which in principle is very simple and often inexpensive. I have an early Multiplex backpack that's more than twenty years old and still functioning, and can carry the company's 1:4 scale DC-300, Alpina and Flamingo. HobbyKing has a similar (if very basic) item for smaller, lighter sport models but it's just not manly enough for the task I have in store.

The Sport Klemm backpack is designed by German model aviators for hardcore sport pilots who have to ascend mountainsides to reach flying sites way up in the Alpine peaks. Such diehards think nothing of an hour's hike (or more) to reach their chosen spot, overlooking the vastness of the thermal-inducing valleys far below. Our equivalent hike would be to the summit of Rhossili Down on the Gower peninsula which, in truth, is an easy





**Top:** There's even a pocket for your mobile phone. **Above:** That's a hat not a rabbit! Also a big Tx, a flask of coffee wrapped in a plastic bag, and lunch.



**The bag sits just 'so right' and does not hit the back of your legs. It also stays rigid and comfy all the way to the top. Awesome!**



**Just ascended Rushup Edge with this Bambino for the first time without feeling totally exhausted and in pain. Flipping brilliant, shoulda gotta this ages ago.**

stroll in comparison. Nevertheless, we need all the help we can get to conserve energy levels for the day's flying.

I recently slope-tested the 'Bambino Plus Comfort' backpack when a Dynamic Soaring day presented itself at Rushup Edge in Derbyshire. I packed my 37 lb (16.8kg) D-130 and Scorpion, my 'lighter wind' model. In the large, zipped pocket at the base of the bag I fitted in a litre-size flask of coffee, an electric screwdriver, and a Jeti DC16 Tx, with room to spare for lunch, a bottle of water, and some additional bits of clothing – hat, gloves and a light wind cheater – which act as padding to support the delicate Tx.

The versatility of this design is remarkable and the comfort in carrying this amount of weight truly a revelation. The heavy-duty shoulder straps and waist strap are similar to those seen on expensive rucksacks designed for hardy hikers and provide excellent support and weight distribution. For the first time, I managed to gently ascend the path to our pits area without stopping in either pain or breathlessness. The sturdy Bambino was perfectly balanced, and comfortably so, without any point loads on my body. This level of comfort gave a relaxed feeling and as my arms were unencumbered I was able to walk normally and make good progress. Usually, in the absence of a backpack, arms are employed as carrying devices for bags and models, which adds a great deal of physical strain.

The base of the Bambino Plus had sufficient weight to maintain vertical stability, even with the wind teasing at the tails of the two protruding aircraft, and the fully-loaded arrangement didn't knock into the back of my thighs as I walked, much to my relief. Indeed the

walking experience under this maximum load was a far more pleasant experience than anticipated.

Having packed the Bambino with my D-130 the backpack's AUW measured 48.5 lb (22kg). Thanks to the high quality of the materials used and excellent manufacturing standards, I'm certain it would allow for even more carrying capacity. The Bambino is a seriously heavy-duty product that will stand the test of time and serve me through my remaining life span of slope sorties.

There are some really useful features built into the pack, such as the internal soft cushion lining to offer a degree of protection to sensitive wing skins. Four Velcro-topped, sealed plastic pockets inside the main bag area will retain all manner of thin items such as maps and other documentation. Externally there's a sturdy plastic window stitched to the top left section, designed to contain your BMFA insurance card and slope club membership just in case proof is required on 'away' adventures when travelling way off-piste. On the opposite corner is a zipped pocket that will snugly keep a small mobile phone safe from loss and weather. The huge pocket set in the centre of the waist and back strap fixing point offers me the opportunity to drop in a hard foam panel to provide further comfort padding and support when the Bambino isn't fully loaded. The pack measures 1600mm x 300mm x 130mm deep, and the robust zip facilitates opening on three sides for easy packing

of treasured models. In the case of the 7.9' (200mm) D130 main wing panel the double-zip allows the panel to protrude, with the zip on either side maintaining support, closed around the panel.

The mighty Stingray fits inside the bag most comfortably, together with the Scorpion and the potent little Pace VXE. The Bambino isn't designed to transport scale sailplanes, the volume of these aircraft types is so specific to type that a tailor-made product would be required. There's ample strap adjustment to allow the Bambino to fit most people and I particularly like the cross-strap that holds the main shoulder supports in the optimal position to prevent slippage or breathing constriction across the chest area. The bag's material is pliable enough to fold into three, allowing a more confined stowage area. A long carrying handle sewn to the side in three sections allows the optimum balance point. It can also be used to hang the fully-loaded pack on the wall to conserve floor space in the workshop.

I'm delighted with this addition to my slope kit as I can now more easily and comfortably tackle some of my favourite slopes. The quality of this product is exceptional and blows the competition out of the window. The price of €179 (plus €10 – €35 for delivery dependant on its destination) seems fair and realistic. Definitely a worthy investment when considering the long-life nature of the product and its ability to significantly ease the burden – [www.sport-klemm.de](http://www.sport-klemm.de) ✈️