

Discovery Trekking Outfitters Wicker Wicking Towel

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Our SNEWS(r) team usually gets pretty amped to test new gear -- call it our insatiable curiosity or desire to try out new things -- especially when it means hitting the great outdoors to do it. However, we have to admit we weren't all that excited about adding a towel to our testing kit on a one-week fly-fishing trip to Alaska in July. After all...the Discovery Trekking Wicker Wicking Towel is just a towel, right? OK, perhaps we underestimated just a bit.

Sure, fresh out of the package and tossed into our duffel for the trip, the olive-drab fabric towel didn't exactly scream performance or proclaim it was anything but one in a bazillion basic backpacking or travel towels we've used in the past. Yes, it was very lightweight, super compact, noticeably soft to the touch, stretchy -- and thin, very thin. We had our doubts about whether the 28-inch by 34-inch swatch of fabric would be able to manage drying even one leg after a swim, let alone an entire body. But hey, we're product testers, willing to risk perpetually damp bods in the pursuit of product evaluation.

The towel's first real test came on day two of the trip, after a very cold bath in the King Salmon river of Alaska. Shivering, our tester was able to dry off quickly. Miraculously, the towel almost seemed to suck the moisture right off his skin and out of his hair. In the name of product testing, he then tossed his used towel to another bather who'd forgotten his towel at home, and that tiny swatch of fabric worked its drying magic yet again. We don't think we've ever seen so much drying power in one piece of fabric, ever.

Even though rain fell during the night periodically, the towel, hung just inside the tent door, was completely dry by morning. Over the next five days, our tester used half the towel to wash his face each morning and the other half to dry off. He also used it to completely dry off after bathing two more times. He stored it wet in his duffel during the day, and then hung it to dry every night. Thanks to the silver-ion particles embedded into the fabric, the towel never began to smell musty or mildew. Even after being stuffed, stretched, rubbed and scrubbed, the towel remained soft to the touch and looking like new. We can't say as much for our tester.

The towel has become a permanent fixture in our tester's travel and backpacking kit, and since Alaska he's carried it to various parts of the United States and used it for two weeks in Croatia. Beyond its function as a towel, our tester has pressed it into use as a damp cloth and neck shade under a hat (ala the French Foreign Legion) and a pillow case.

OK, so we're impressed by a piece of fabric. It's true. But it's hard not to be impressed when something not only performs to the level advertised, but exceeds expectations as the Discovery Trekking towel did.

SNEWS(r) Rating: 5 hands clapping (1 to 5 hands clapping possible, with 5 clapping hands representing functional and design perfection)

Suggested Retail: Large Towel - 58" x 34" (\$29); Medium Towel - 28" x 34" (\$19); Small Towel - 28" x 16" (\$14); X-Small Towel - 13" x 10" (\$12).

For more information: www.discoverytrekking.com