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The Cosmo is a solid headlight with good performance in general, and excellent flood lights for close use. At \$30 list, it falls into a tough price range where a little more money gets you a much higher performance headlight, like the Spot, and products like the Tikkina offer better overall performance for 33% lower price. Performance Comparison Trail Finding A score of 4 for trail finding is disappointing for a \$30 headlight, and most similarly priced competitors offer significantly better performance. Beam Distance Photos Black Diamond CosmoBlack Diamond Spot When comparing the Cosmo (top left) and Black Diamond Spot (right), two products from the same manufacturer and priced only \$10 apart, it is noteworthy that they can vary so much. The Spot throws a much superior distance bar. Proximity The cosmo's strongest performance is when used around the camp, or in the tent, for close proximity work. The flood bar is one of the best of all the headlights we have tested, wide, evenly lit, and dimmable from beautiful soft lighting for use in the tent, and brighter for use in the camp kitchen. It's worth noting that the Black Diamond Astro offers a flood beam that's almost as good, at a price 33% lower. Battery life is where the Cosmo edges slightly for the Spot. At 3.0 grams or 86 grams, this is a compact but not ultralight headlight. It's about the same weight as the Spot. By comparison, the featherweight champion Petzl e + LITE is less than a third of the weight at 27 g. This is a solid light, but hard to justify buying. On \$30 list is sandwiched between competitors who either score much better for another \$6-10 or offer the same or better performance for lower costs. The BD Spot, for example, performs significantly better for just \$10 more. It has an almost identical form factor and mass with a much better beam. On the low side, the Petzl Tikkina offers better all-round performance at 33% lower cost. While the Cosmo headlight isn't at the top of Black Diamond's headlight line, it may well offer the best feature to keep the price in balance, while offering just about everything you need in a backpack headlight. After using the higher end Spot 325 light that contains a few more features, I decided to give the Cosmo a try this year simply because, it's simpler. The Black Diamond Cosmo is backcountry light designed around Black Diamonds known form factor, and offers a spot beam, a wide beam, plus a red light option. The spot and flood bars are both activated to provide maximum brightness, which will vary depending on your version. I did testing the Cosmo 250 - then providing 250 lumens at maximum brightness. better or worse, almost as soon as you order a Black Diamond headlight and use it on your first trip it's probably outdated, and the latest version of this light, the Cosmo 300 offers a little boost-up boost-up 300 lumens at maximum brightness. The Cosmo can be locked so it doesn't come on in your pack during the day by pressing both buttons on top at the same time for a few seconds, the same to unlock. The light weighs 2.95 grams (measured with 3 AAA Eneloop batteries). The light is considered waterproof with an IPX8 rating, although as with many Black Diamond lights, water can still be in the battery compartment and this area will have to be dehydrated after use in the rain. As mentioned earlier, I've been using the light with rechargeable Sanyo Eneloop batteries, making you ready for a trip easily as I can just top out the batteries on the charger at home to make sure I leave with a fully charged light. One thing I actually like about cosmo is that it doesn't feature Black Diamond's Power Tap (as you find on the Spot). Power Tap is a feature that ramps up the light immediately to max power when you touch the side of the light, but in the field I have found accidental activations with this feature are common, especially when using the light handheld. The Cosmo has no such feature, so no blindingly accidental instant max power activations if you're just trying to read a book in the tent. On cosmo, you can increase the light to maximum brightness by using the top button and using a (second) long press. This works in spot mode, but since your previous settings have been remembered, if you're using the red LED or white flood LED it will only ramp up the red light or flood to maximum brightness. It would be nice if you could go from red/flood to maximum (white light) brightness of other modes than spot too without using the secondary mode button. All light modes on the Cosmo can be dimmed by holding down the main button and then releasing when the desired light level is reached. While the brightness of the Cosmo is not near the top of the pack when it comes to brightness on a modern headlight, I've noticed that it's enough at night, either for around the camp or for following a trail – and that's for the 250. The latest version of the light will be slightly brighter. In the tent, the red option retains the night vision and ensures a good lantern when you hang the light at the top of your tent. Unfortunately, the wide flood beam option (you switch by options using the small top button) doesn't dim enough for me. Even on the dimmest setting, it's still too bright for me in tent tasks, but luckily the spot beam or red modes can be dimmed enough to be workable. I also wish the top buttons were easier to use even without gloves when it is hard to tell where the buttons are or which is which. Both the spot and flood bars have a decent color temperature and are white without blue, but are not so nice of a one temperature as something like my Zebralight H52w. The Cosmo is comfortable to wear and can be adjusted via a click mechanism to tilt up or down, but not infinitely... sometimes one wants the light between the available adjustment settings angle. Cosmo doesn't have a battery indicator. However, using rechargeable batteries and fully charging for every trip is a good strategy. Run time for the 250 is rated at 6 hours on high, up to 4 hours for the Cosmo 300 (presumably with similar battery life at similar brightness levels, however). These figures are based on the ANSI FL-1 standard, which means a runtime to only 10% of the initial light output. On top of that Black Diamond also mentions a 24 hour reserve period, which provides a weak light at close range. Overall, the Black Diamond Cosmo offers good value and offers everything you really need in a backpack light. While a few improvements would be welcome, it's hard to complain at the price point of the light. And when considering affordability and simplicity, the Cosmo line may even prefer some of the lights higher in the Black Diamond headlight lineup. The Black Diamond Cosmo headlight sells for less than \$30. You find it on Amazon.com and here at REI. Read more of the October 2020 Issue Home/Articles/Broken in George Driver September 17, 2017 Sep '20 Black Diamond Cosmo \$69.99Weight: 87gUsed by: Gear-pinching former deputy editor George DriverUsed for: Three years This is actually my girlfriend's headlight, but I like it so much that I usually 'borrow' it on a trip. The Cosmo has a number of useful features, including an emergency strobe feature, red light to maintain night vision for stargazing and a transport lock. It is operated by a single low-profile push button, but the limited controls require practice to navigate through the features. It runs on three AAA batteries and has good battery life (6 hours on max power), although using batteries feels a bit outdated and wasteful – it would be great to have a long life battery that can be charged with a USB. With 225 lumens, I've found it suffice for getting around the cabin or camping, and finding my way along a path in the dark. I also like that it can run at a very low brightness, which is useful for reading in a full cabin. Because it's so light, it's comfortable to wear and easy to adjust - my other headlight has a rear mounted battery pack that's cumbersome and uncomfortable. Verdict: A feature-rich, comfortable headlight with a good price. Since 1991, Wilderness has one simple goal: to help Kiwis "See more, do more, live more" of New Zealand. If you value mission, consider registering. As a loyal supporter you will receive these advantages: the best outdoor journalism in New Zealand We have won several awards for our journalism and magazine production. NZ's best travel. Travel. more than 610 trips with downloadable maps and route notes. Reliable gear reviews. Every month we look at gear that we have been bashing and thrashing for months so you determine if it's worth your money. Web exclusives. Every week we publish stories you won't find in the magazine. Check out our latest web exclusives. Member benefits. Our WildCard offers discounts to more than 20 partners throughout New Zealand. Your support goes a long way. Your subscription will help us fund NZ's best outdoor journalists and writers and ensure that Wilderness will be there to inspire the next generation of outdoor Kiwis. A subscription costs as little as \$7.00/month for direct access to all articles, travel, gear reviews and gear guides. Check out all our subscription options and join the club. Are you already a subscriber? Sign in now. Black Diamond Spot and Cosmo headlights. Ultralight Headlights Black Diamond Spot \$40, 3 oz. (with 3 AAA batteries, included) Black Diamond Cosmo \$30, 3 oz. (with 3 AAA batteries, included) moosejaw.com A headlight doesn't have to take a big bite out of your gear budget—in fact, as these two models show, you need a multi-featured backcountry lamp to score for as little as \$30, and a high-performance model for less than you're likely to spend on food and gas for a weekend trip. From backpacking in Idaho's White Cloud Mountains in October, Utah's Dirty Devil River canyon in late March, and the Panamint Range of Death Valley National Park in May, to a four-day climb of the Mountaineers Route at California's 14,505-foot Mount Whitney in mid-April and day hike the 32-mile, 10,000-vertical foot Pemi Loop in New Hampshire's White Mountains in August, I put the Cosmo and Spot through many hours of use. Both shone on the usual tasks, such as lighting up the way a tent is set up or off-trail hiking in the dark, but my testing also tests their differences in the spotlight. Both redesigned for 2016, the Cosmo and Spot share many useful similarities. With both, a click of the power button switches off the TriplePower LED, two clicks powers the dimmer white lamp (DoublePower LED in cosmo, SinglePower LED in the Spot), and three clicks puts the headlight in white LED flash mode. With both, keeping the power on/off button for two seconds switches it off to the red LED for night vision (DoublePower in cosmo, singlepower in the Spot); and both have a red LED flash mode. If you hold down the power button for two seconds while the lamp is off in red LED mode, both turn on the white light. They both have dimming ability by holding the button down. Hi, I'm Michael Lanza, creator of The Big Outside, who has some top outdoor blog Click here to sign up for my free email newsletter. Click here to learn how I can help you plan your next trip. Click here to get full access to all the stories from my blog. Follow my mine on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube. Black Diamond Spot Each has a smart locking feature to prevent it from accidentally switching into a pack-just hold the power button in each mode for four seconds and it closes, with the Cosmo flashing red to indicate that it is locked, and the Spot power-meter light flashing blue. The Spot is waterproof to one meter underwater for 30 minutes, the Cosmo water resistant to splashes, rain, and a briefing, shallow immersion (but dry the batteries and casing after dipping one of them). They differ in brightness and range. The less expensive Cosmo projects 160 lumens to 200 meters/60 feet at its brightest setting, the Spot 300 lumens up to 260 meters/80 meters, according to BD. Many hikers and backpackers rarely need a headlight to project a beam 200 feet or more—but that kind of power can be crucial in an emergency, or route-finding or abseiling in the dark, and useful in skinning uphill before sunrise for some backcountry turns. The Cosmo is pretty bright, but few ultra-light headlights match the Spot's 200 lumens. The choice comes down to how you plan to use a headlight. Black Diamond Cosmo The Spot's unique PowerTap technology allows you to simply tap on the right side of the enclosure (highlighted by a lamp icon) to cycle between the TriplePower LED and SinglePower LED- a feature I like for conditions such as rolling into a campsite late at night in the Panamint Range, after a few hours backpacking in the dark, and switching from the brightest light for walking to medium brightness for pitching my tent. The Spot also has dimming capabilities in red LED mode. Find your next adventure in your Inbox. Sign up for my free email newsletter now. They have an identical, streamlined case, with a bet-on/off button that is rarely accidentally turned on, an adjustable, comfortably wide headband and a battery compartment that can be easily opened with the tap of a small lever, without tools. BD says the Spot's burn time (how long it works on a set of batteries) ranges from 50 to 200 hours, the Cosmos from 50 hours to 250 hours. I took some typical trips with both without replacing the batteries. My take: If you just want a headlight that is reliable, lightweight, functional in typical daywalking and backpacking situations, and cheap, the Black Diamond Cosmo is good value. But for just a few dollars, the Spot offers high-performance features and clarity at a hard-to-beat price. BUY IT NOW You support my work on this blog by clicking on one of these links or the text ad below to create a Black Diamond Spot on moosejaw.com, ems.com, sunnysports.com or rei.com, or a Black Diamond Cosmo on moosejaw.com. Tell me what you think. I've spent a lot of time writing this review, so if you enjoyed it, consider giving it a share using one of the buttons buttons and leave a comment or question at the bottom of this story. I'd really appreciate it. Check out all my reviews of headlights, hiking gear and backpacking gear at The Big Outside. NOTE: I've been testing gear for Backpacker Magazine for 20 years. At The Big Outside I only look at what I consider to be the best outdoor gear and clothing. Check out all my Gear Reviews at The Big Outside. —Michael Lanza You live for the outdoors. The Big Outside helps you get out. Sign up now and get free e-guide! e-guide!