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WENGER EVOGRIP S18 SWISS ARMY KNIFE

**TEST SERIES BY PATRICK MCNEILLY
FIELD REPORT**

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TESTER INFORMATION

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| NAME: | Patrick McNeilly |
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| AGE: | 47 |
| LOCATION: | Gaithersburg, Maryland, USA |
| GENDER: | M |
| HEIGHT: | 5' 8" (1.73 m) |
| WEIGHT: | 155 lb (70.30 kg) |
| TORSO SIZE | 18.5 in (47 cm) |
| WAIST SIZE | 34 in (86 cm) |

I have been hiking for over 20 years but backpacking only since about 2002. Most of my backpacking is done as overnight trips and occasional weekend and weeklong trips. My typical packweight is approximately 18 to 20 lb (8 to 9 kg) before food or water. Most of my backpacking is the three season variety in the mountains of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. In addition to backpacking, I also fish, hunt, and enjoy orienteering. As a result, some of my backpacking equipment gets used in a number of different venues.

INITIAL REPORT

PRODUCT INFORMATION & SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Wenger

Year of Manufacture: 2010

Manufacturer's Website: <http://www.wengerna.com/>

MSRP: US \$69.95

Listed Weight: 3.1 oz (88 g)

Measured Weight: 3.1 oz (88 g)

Color: Yellow and Black

Listed Length (closed): 3.25 in (8.3 cm)

Measured Length (closed): 3.375 in (8.6 cm)

Measures Width: 0.875 in (2.2 cm)

Main Blade Length (listed): 2.5 in (6.4 cm)

Main Blade Length (measured): 2.5 in (6.4 cm)

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

The knife that I received is the EvoGrip S18 Patagonian Expedition Race model. This model is listed on the Wenger website and appears to be identical to the standard EvoGrip S18, except for the laser engraved Patagonian Expedition Race logo.

The knife has 14 different tools/features made from stainless steel which include:

2.5 in (6.4 cm) locking knife blade

2.75 in (7 cm) double-cut wood saw

Scissors

Screwdriver

Bottle cap lifter

Can opener

Wire stripper

Nail file

Nail cleaner

Phillip's head screwdriver

Reamer

Toothpick



Tweezers
Key ring

The knife has an ergonomic handle with rubber pads to provide a non-slip grip. The Wenger website indicates that this allows for the four main hand surfaces to securely grip the knife.

There is also a release lever for the lock on the main knife blade located on one side of the handle. This mechanism is located approximately 0.5 in (1.3 cm) down the handle from the base of the blade. The knife blade also stops at 115 degrees to allow the fingers to be moved out of the way before completely closing the blade.

The scissors include a serrated, self-sharpening design. The manufacturer's website also indicates that they are springless. The flat head screwdriver is integrated into the bottle cap lifer (as is the wire stripper) and has a locking mechanism that allows the tool to retract into the body of the knife to prevent it from accidentally closing while in use.

READING THE INSTRUCTIONS

The EvoGrip S18 came with a single sheet of instructions which included a description of the company's limited lifetime warranty. It also included a short description on maintenance of the knife. Lastly, there is a diagram showing all the different tools available on Wenger knives, in case you are not sure what a particular item is.

TRYING IT OUT

One of the first things I noticed was the yellow and black color of the knife. A bit of a surprise as opposed to the typical red of Swiss Army knives. The Wenger website indicates that this will make it easier to see the knife at the bottom of a pack. The next thing I noticed was the lock release button which seems to protrude higher than any of the other tools of the knife.

After opening and closing the different tools, I was impressed with how sharp all the tools are. The saw blade is scary sharp. Even the can opener is incredibly sharp and looks like it could easily draw blood.

Most of the tools opened pretty smoothly. The only real exception to this was the scissors. When closed, this tool sits fairly low compared to the others and

the little indentation to help grip the scissors is located right next to the lock release button. I found that it was easiest to depress the lock button and try to open the scissors. When doing this, I needed to be careful that I didn't squeeze the scissors and accidentally cut myself.

The toothpick and tweezers fit into small recesses in one end of the knife near the key ring. They sit flush with the plastic sides of the knife and can be a little difficult to get at since my fingernails are pretty short.



I like the EvoGrip handle. It feels very secure in my hand. I have used similar knives and I feel this has a very comfortable grip. I do notice the lock release button when I grip the handle but I am not sure if this will cause any problems or not.

The overall size of the knife is not too large. It is somewhat larger than other knives I carry (primarily in the width) but it is not excessive.

TESTING STRATEGY

I typically carry a knife with me daily and have been doing so for at least the past twenty years. I plan on using the knife virtually every day for all sorts of things. This includes everything from cutting up food to various household and yard jobs. I do plan on using it during hikes as well.

SUMMARY

The Wenger EvoGrip S18 Knife is a sturdy multi-functional knife with blades made of stainless steel. The knife has 14 different tools including a saw, scissors, flat and Phillips screwdrivers, can opener, and cap lifter. The knife also has an ergonomic handle with rubber grip pads. The knife's main blade and flat screwdriver have locking mechanisms to prevent accidental closure. The knife is a reasonable size for everyday carrying and the most of the tools are easy to open, with the exception of the scissors.

I want to thank Wenger and BackpackGearTest.org for the opportunity to test this product.

FIELD REPORT

FIELD LOCATIONS AND CONDITIONS

I have used the EvoGrip S18 on seven day hikes over the course of this testing period. These hikes were either in Maryland near Washington, DC, or in Northern New Jersey. Some of the specific locations included Seneca Creek State Park, Little Bennett Regional Park, and the C&O Canal National Historic in Park in Maryland, as well as the Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area in New Jersey. These hikes ranged from 3 to 8 miles (5 to 13 km) and were all on maintained but sometimes rocky trails with elevations that ranged from 300 to 900 ft (91 to 274 m). The temperatures ranged from 45 to 85 F (7 to 29 C) with clear to overcast skies.

More notably, the knife has been in my pocket and gotten some type of use on a daily basis.

PERFORMANCE IN THE FIELD

The EvoGrip S18 Knife has performed pretty well thus far in the testing. However, right at the beginning of the test period, I was in New Jersey getting ready for a hike and found that a lacing loop on my shoe had torn out. There was one plastic piece on the shoe that I needed to remove and I pulled out the knife blade to cut it off. I'm not sure what happened but the blade did not cut the plastic and seemed to slip off. Afterward, I noticed that the locking mechanism no longer worked on the knife. I thought this was really strange but could not see what might be out of place. This was a problem because the blade

would no longer stay in an opened position when in use. I felt this was a safety issue since the knife could easily close on my fingers during use.

My efforts to contact the manufacturer started with checking their website to see how to handle a return. The website simply mentioned that the knife could be returned and if there were any questions to contact customer service. I felt I would rather deal with a live person, so I searched the website and found a number for customer service but that simply lead me to a recorded list of options which eventually told me to return the knife, just like on the website. I would say that isn't the greatest customer service when I need something answered. I wrote a letter describing what happened to the knife and sent it to the address on the website. Nine days later, I received another knife in the mail. There was no indication whether the knife was repaired or simply replaced. Due to what I thought was a pretty quick turn around, I believe this to be a new knife.

Since then I have not had any problems with the knife. Aside from hiking, I have used it in all sorts of situations, from cooking, to home remodeling work, to opening letters at the office. I have used all the tools on the knife at least once. I like the ergonomic grip. It seems to allow for a nice firm grip, even when I have wet hands.

The blade has remained sharp and hasn't needed to be sharpened. The blade length easily handles a variety of uses but there have been times (like when peeling fruit) I was looking for a smaller blade. The locking mechanism works well but the release button is positioned where it feels like I may be depressing it if I grip the knife hard. This always makes me a little nervous but I haven't had it close on me during use.

The scissors are a nice feature to have, especially on the trail. I have used them to cut duct tape into circles for use on blisters without any problems. With lesser quality scissors, that task can be quite difficult. I still don't like how difficult it is to get at the scissors. I find that I must depress the locking mechanism to open the scissors which seems to me to be a real flaw in the design of the knife. This makes the scissors the most difficult tool on the knife to open.

The saw blade is easy to open and works well on small branches. I would say that the saw can work on branches that are 1.5 in (3.8 cm) in diameter but those that are 1 in (2.5 cm) are probably best. This might not be the tool I use every day but it has come in pretty handy.

The bottle opener is actually three tools in one (opener, flathead screwdriver and wire stripper). No problem opening bottle caps and I thank Wenger for helping me open my favorite beverages. The screwdriver works just fine and I especially like the locking feature. I haven't come close to having the tool close on my hand. I have had this type of tool close on me before (on a different knife) and it really hurts. I used the wire stripper and while it does a good job, I felt that the notch for the wire stripper was a little too close to the handle. This made it somewhat difficult to grip the wires correctly and made the process go a little slower.

I have opened numerous cans with the can opener and the tool does open them fairly easily. I did note that the opener did cut fairly deeply into the contents of the can. This meant that the can opener always needed to be cleaned well. Not a big deal but I noted it so that, when in the field, it would be taken care of when necessary.

The tools on the back of the knife include the Phillips screwdriver and the reamer. The screwdriver is really handy and I use it often to tighten small easily accessible screws. I like how it drives from the center of the handle which I feel allows for a greater amount of torque. I have only used the reamer once but it came was very useful. I used it to punch a hole in my hiking show to allow it to lace it up (as I mentioned above). It was pretty easy to punch through multiple layers of nylon and leather which I thought might be a difficult task.

I have used the toothpick and tweezers on various occasions and felt that they work well but are a little hard to get at sometimes.

The one tool I can do without is the nail file. I have only used it one time to actually say that I tried it out. I find that I have little or no use for it. I believe that a smaller knife blade would be more useful in its place.

SUMMARY

The Wenger EvoGrip S18 Swiss Army Knife is a multi-functional knife with 14 different tools which allow for a variety of uses. The ergonomic handle provides for a sturdy grip on the knife. The knife's tools are very sharp and haven't needed re-sharpening. With the exception of the scissors most of the tools are easy to access. The locking mechanism release feels as though it can be pressed during use.

Things I like:

1. Sharp blades
2. Firm comfortable grip
3. Good variety of tools

Things I don't like:

1. Placement of locking mechanism release
2. Difficult to get at scissors
3. Nail file, don't find it useful

This concludes my Field Report. The Long-Term Report will be appended to this report in about two months. Please check back then for more information

I continue to thank Wenger and BackpackGearTest.org for the opportunity to test this product.