



Fresh Air Junkie: The Outdoor Gear, News, and Adventure On-line Magazine

Wenger Swiss Army Mike Horn Knife Review

Wenger Swiss Army Ranger Knife Upgrade



Wegner Swiss Army is indisputably one of the finest manufacturers of outdoor cutlery in the world. It isn't really fair to compare them to those manufacturers of lesser quality knives: it isn't really a contest. We have been especially pleased with the Wenger Ranger SAK line. The lines models range from the simple but elegant model 151 with a single straight blade to the recent "Mike Horn" model, which features every survival tool an outdoor knife should offer. So where does the model 179 fit in this spectrum of knives?

First of all, every Fresh Air Junkie ought to have at least one knife on them when out soaking up an experience. And the starting point for selecting an outdoor knife is Wenger. It can be a little daunting at first: do I buy just one knife, or one of each? The vast majority of the Ranger models are sold with black handles made from solid hard plastic. Each model differs in the product specifications such as straight blades, saw blades, can-openers and awls. They all are great companions for any hiker, camper, skier – any body in motion in the outdoors.

Wenger recently introduced a higher end line of Ranger knives labeled 75, 78 and, of course, the Expedition 179. These models are

redesigned versions of the Ranger with concept of ergonomics in mind.

The most notable difference between these new models and the other Ranger SAK is that the handle features the "Evo Grip system." The system includes multicolored SAKs which use a black grip non-slip rubber. The handle is rubber coated and molded to fit perfectly inside the user's hand. The purpose? The combination of features provide greater comfort, safety and support.



We carried several different knives with us on our last trek up Mount San Jacinto. A couple of guys in our group scoffed at the idea that there could be a need for something more than a basic pocket knife. Other members always carry several different knives to be ready for any eventuality. The

debate continued at various points over the day. On the ascent, we rolled the Ranger 179 in small patches of snow strewn across the trail. We got the handle wet and then tested using the knife on branches and rope. True to Wenger's promise, the Ranger 179 refused to slip free from our grip. The black rubber on the EvoGrip repelled the moisture and provided solid traction at all four grip points. It was clear that Wenger's description that the SAK was designed to be cradled perfectly by the human hand was not just hype: it really lived up to the claim. The skeptics in our group had to admit that the grip was far superior to the black hard plastic.

Wenger has tested its engineering in the Patagonia Expedition in which teams of four race through globe's toughest terrain. The Ranger 179 is Wenger's official race knife for the Patagonia Expedition and has been designed to aid the Wenger race team in every clime and place. The two closest models to the 179 in the Ranger series are the 75 and 78. These two cousins sport the EvoGrip as the 179, but differ in tool features. The model 78 offers all of the same tools as the model 179 with the exception of the main blade. The model 78 features a straight-edge blade while the 179 features a serrated/straight combination blade for increased versatility. Surprisingly, the model 179 has a lower price tag than the model 78.

The three models of knives share the majority of major features including a razor-sharp can-opener, an awl complete with sewing eye, a locking screwdriver, corkscrew, key ring, reamer, double-cut wood saw (which comes in handy in gathering firewood), and a 3.9" locking serrated/straight edge combination blade. The locking blade features a rivet at the top which allows for one-handed opening. As with all Ranger SAKs, the locking blade can be released by pressing the Wenger emblem embedded in the handle. The 75 model differs from the 179 in that it has traded the double-edge wood saw for a pair of spring loaded pliers at price of \$10 extra. Shoppers must evaluate whether they intend on working more with metal or wood.

It can be quite overwhelming when researching the many options that Wenger's Ranger SAK has to offer. Shoppers are forced to pit serrated blades vs. straight edge and saws vs. pliers. The Patagonia Ranger 179 offers a perfect blend of all the necessities for outdoor survival without slashing the wallet. It is perhaps the most complete and safest bargain of the EvoGrip Ranger line. The EvoGrip line runs roughly \$15-\$20 more than the standard Ranger line, however the system is proven to work. The consensus at the end of the hike up Mount San Jacinto was that the Ranger SAK 179 was a great choice for an outdoor knife, whether you carry one or several knives. Like a good handshake, it is all about the grip!

By Kevin Varner

Specifications:

Model: RangerGrip 179

Official knife: Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race Knife

Manufacturer: Wenger

Length: 5.1" closed

Weight: 5.6 oz.

Color: Yellow and Black

Price: \$69.95