

Water Treatment with SteriPEN

I love my SteriPEN Adventurer. Just for a little background, I used my first SteriPEN, the predecessor to the now Classic model, leading week long teen backpacking trips for 10 weeks for each of 2 summers. Then I used it for an AT thru-hike in 2004. The battery clip broke somewhere in VT or NH but it still worked to get me to Katahdin. When I asked for a replacement battery clip from Hydro-Photon, the manufacturer, they apologized for not having the clip and shipped me a new Classic model with an improved battery situation. After 4 years of heavy use I upgraded to the lighter newer Adventurer for 2 thru-hikes of the PCT in 2007 & 2008 and then for a thru of the CDT.

If you get a SteriPEN, read the directions! Especially learn how to take the cover off and put it back on. It's easy, but reading the directions can avoid possible damage. Treat it with care. If you tend to fumble stuff or have no mechanical finesse, maybe it's not for you. I have been using SteriPENS since 2001 or 2002 when they first hit the market. The Adventurer uses a pair of 3volt Lithium batteries of type 123 as does the newer Journey. A pair of them weigh in at just over an ounce so there is little penalty for carrying a backup set. The price can vary widely. Some times they are sold as a pair and sometimes individually. I found them at pharmacies, hardware stores, big box stores and some big grocery stores. Some places they were \$10 for a pair and some places they were \$12 each. Crazy. They usually last me 3 weeks or more on a thru-hike. If I was camped near water I would not treat my cooking water. I treated all my drinking water unless it came from a cache or a public faucet. After considering the cost of all those bottles of Aqua Mura or replacement cartridges, there really isn't much difference in the cost of operation.

The Adventurer got me through a thru-hike of the PCT in 2007 and then again in 2008. In 2010 I used it on the southern 1,500 miles of the CDT. In 2011 it accompanied me on the northern 1,200 miles of the CDT. One of the great things was being able to pause to fill a bottle from a creek or lake and just keep walking. The SteriPEN lived in its holster on my hip belt initially but now in a custom pocket stitched to the outside of the lower mesh side pocket on my pack (lighter and handier). I would treat water as I walked. There was no fussing with or waiting for chemicals. There was no time consuming tedious pumping and fiddling with hoses. There was no need to even take off my pack! OK. So I'm weird. I don't like stopping and taking my pack off.

The Adventurer weighs in at just under 4 ounces with lithium batteries included. With the holster it comes to about 4.5 ounces. This is far less than a filter. The Classic (blue & white) weighs about twice that and uses 4 standard AA batteries. Use Lithium or NIMH, not alkaline.

Now, about water bottles. The Classic and the new Journey can be used with virtually any bottle, even with a mouth as small as a soda bottle. In fact, with a soda bottle the Classic and the new Journey will seal with the bottle so that the pair can be inverted with the bottle on top of the SteriPEN. That way the bottle doesn't have to be completely full for the SteriPEN to turn on. The Journey looks good but I haven't used one.

On the other hand the smallest mouthed bottle I can find that the Adventurer will fit is a 1 liter (quart) cranberry juice or Gatorade bottle. I like these bottles quite a lot. Of course a Nalgene bottle will work with any of them. I don't like Nalgene because they are too heavy, too expensive and I can't drink out of them while walking without buying an accessory.

So you may have figured, I highly recommend the SteriPEN.

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