

KITLIST

STORAGE

There is a large rear pocket with a compartment for a drinks bladder and tube routing. Underneath the seat is a ballast pocket for additional storage. Two side pockets complete the storage

REMOVABLE INSTRUMENT DECK

The instrument attaches via two magnetic clips and a popper and sits in a pocket in the pod. It has a zipped pocket below

NICE LARGE RESERVE HANDLE

It's good to see Apco have used a large easy-to-find reserve handle. Bridles run through a zipped channel to the shoulders

AIRFOAM PROTECTION WITH LEXAN PLATE

Apco have used a foam-filled bag that gives a semi-rigid feel to the harness. A Lexan plate on the bottom spreads any impact

THREE-STEP SPEED BAR

The Kitto come with a three-step speed bar pre-installed. The speed lines run through good quality pulleys

POD SUPPORT

The footboard is supported by two lines on each side (top and bottom). Adjusting the length is done by moving length knots, which can be a bit tricky

APCO KITTO POD

Marcus King flies the new lightweight XC harness from Apco

► DETAILS

1. Simple two-buckles harness closure
 2. Plastic ball-and-cord pod closures
 3. Comparing airbag protection top-to-bottom: Apco Kitto; Supair Strike 2; Woody Valley GTO Light 2
- All photos: Charlie King

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS

Apco say: "The Kitto is a lightweight, seatboard-free pod harness. It's light, but in line with Apco's tradition, it does not compromise on durability, safety or comfort."

Pilot level: Experienced pilots

Sizes: S/M, 2.51kg; L/XL, 2.68kg

Cert: EN/LTF

apcoaviation.com

The Kitto is Apco's latest addition to their pod range. It's the lightest, at just over 2.5kg for the S/M size. We tested the newly released L/XL at 2.68kg.

The Kitto is a seatboardless design using a hammock-style seat. The hammock is supported by a series of four cords, a bit like Ozone's Ozium. The shoulder straps and lumbar support straps can be adjusted in the air as they use webbing. Apco say you should not need to change the lines but only adjust the lumbar support and the pod length to get the right angle. I found this worked well and was able to set up the harness quite quickly, although the knots on the pod lines can be quite hard to undo.

Once set up properly the pod looks smooth; the pod itself is an integral part of the harness and cannot be changed.

Getting in

The harness uses a combined chest- and leg-strap system so you have just two buckles to do up. They are lightweight pass-through buckles, rather than quick-release, so are a bit harder to use than some but are very secure. The leg-strap lengths can be adjusted. The pod itself is secured with two small plastic balls on each side that go through corresponding cord loops: very simple and they work reliably.

Apco have fitted a bungee to the footplate of the harness with a plastic ball you can tuck into your shoelaces. This makes getting into the pod after launch very easy, and avoids that thing of having to search desperately with your leg.

Protection and reserve

Back protection comes in the form of a 17cm foam airbag. It's pretty stiff so gives a solid

SIMPLE TWO-BUCKLE CLOSURE

The Kitto uses a strap system with the leg straps sewn into the chest strap so there are just two buckles to do up

ELASTICATED POD MATERIAL

The pod is made from very elasticated material with a windproof coating. Magnets sewn in the seam help keep it closed

feel to the seat. On the side facing the outside of the harness Apco have fitted a Lexan (plastic) plate, designed to spread the load of an impact.

The reserve is fitted above the protection in the small of the back. This doesn't affect the rating of the harness, but, like all harnesses with reserves in the lumbar region, it does mean if you land on it you land on the packed reserve, not foam, so it can be seen as a bit of

a compromise in terms of back protection. It's good to see that Apco have bucked the trend for small reserve handles. Instead, they have used a large, easy-to-find handle. It would be nicer if the handle was placed a bit lower down as to me it feel a bit 'under your armpit' rather than on your hip, as Matt Wilkes's recent study showed is the optimum position.

The reserve pocket design uses zips running along each side that open when the reserve is deployed. Apco have also used a zip to seal the channel that the bridles run to the shoulders in. It all looks very neat and seems secure against accidental deployment.

Storage

The storage set-up is standard for this style of harness with a large back pocket and a ballast pocket inside the pod just in front of the protection. If you want to use it to carry kit on a vol-biv then you can remove the back protection and replace it with your sleeping bag/mat.

Instrument deck

The optional Apco Flight Deck Light is attached very quickly with two magnetic clips and a popper. It sits in a pocket within the top of the pod so is nicely integrated. A nice touch is the leash that attaches to a karabiner, in case the attachments come undone.

As well as the Velcro deck with attachment points there is a zipped pocket underneath, but no dedicated powercord routing. In flight it puts the instruments in a good position for viewing and keeps them there.

In flight

Having flown hammock harnesses since the Impress 3 I instantly felt at home in this harness. It is very much an evolution of that style. It does feel a bit firmer than some with its fairly solid-feeling airfoam protector, but no more than the Woody Valley GTO Light. There

is no additional stiffening down the sides like on the GTO Light so it feels more of a classic hammock. It also feels a bit narrower than the GTO with its standard protection. The airfoam bag is around 6cm thinner and has rounded corners compared to the squared-off corners on the Woody Valley.

Over the course of a couple of two-hour local flights I found the Kitto very comfortable straight from the off. I'm 193cm, so quite tall, but there was plenty of adjustment left. The stiffness of the airfoam doesn't cause any obvious creasing in the hammock and I felt well supported. It feels a little less stable than the GTO, similar to my memory of the Advance Impress 3; I imagine Ozium pilots would feel at home with the similar geometry. It has a less precise feel than a seatboard harness, with the more subtle roly feel of a hammock. The silver windproof coating works pretty well even on a cold winter's day with light trousers on.

The speed-bar system works well and is easy to use. I didn't feel any real extra pressure in my lower back when stamping on the bar and I used it for extended periods on the local ridge run. The only thing that could be improved is being able to attach it slightly further up the sides of the footplate rather than the bottom to lift it off the floor of the pod a bit.

Once you land a bonus is how small a package the harness folds up into.

The verdict

If you are looking for a light harness but don't want to lose durability this looks like a good choice. It is simpler and lighter than some of the other options such as that GTO Light or Gin Genie X-Alps but made of robust materials. There are clearly similarities with other harnesses but Apco have created a well finished, comfortable pod harness that should appeal to many pilots. **KG**

