

**Outside** WINTER 2011



# BUYER'S GUIDE

## THE BEST WINTER GEAR

# 267

PRODUCTS  
TESTED

# +

# 95

KILLER  
DEALS  
FOR  
UNDER  
\$150

STARRING:  
THIS YEAR'S TOP SKIS

ALL-MOUNTAIN  
SNOWBOARDS

THE TOUGHEST  
SNOWSHOES

ULTRA-WARM GLOVES

COLD-WEATHER RUNNING  
SHOES & MUCH MORE

2011  
**Outside**  
GEAR OF THE  
YEAR

\$6.95  
DISPLAY UNTIL APRIL 2011



OUTSIDEONLINE.COM

**PLUS:**  
WHY YOU NEED **ROCKERED SKIS** (PAGE 39)  
THE WORLD'S **SAFEST HELMET** (PAGE 46)

## SNOWSHOES

### FITS ANY FOOT

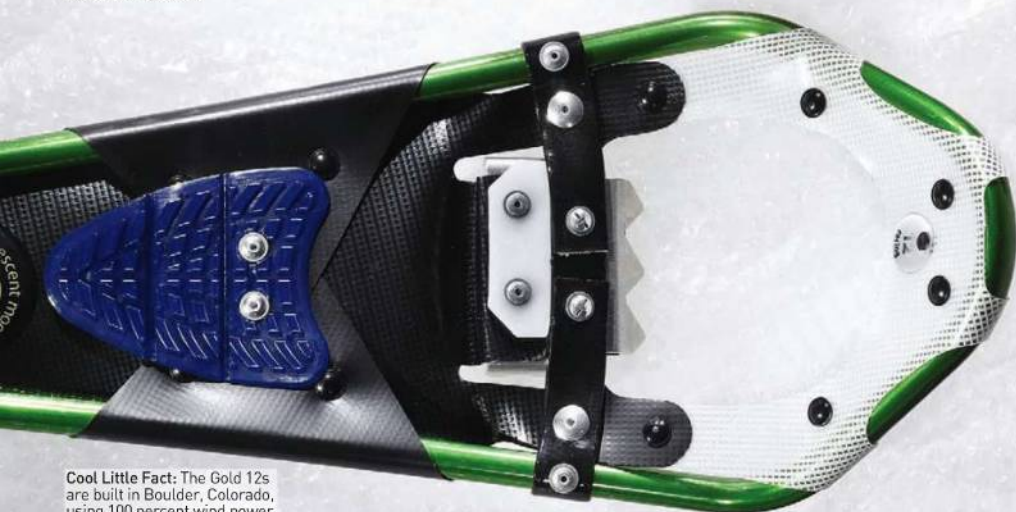
#### MSR LIGHTNING AXIS \$240

With most snowshoes, it's just strap 'em on and go. That's fine, unless you're a bit duckfooted or pigeon-toed, in which case you'll likely step on your tails, trip on your tips, and generally stumble around in misery. There's another way: With the pull of a pin, MSR's new binding system rotates up to three settings to the left or right, so you can tailor them to fit your personal stride. Once you dial it in, you've got a versatile and durable (aircraft-grade-aluminum-framed) snowshoe with just enough float for fresh snow, plenty of bite for hardpack, and a heel lifter for steeper terrain. And if you need extra float, you can add surface area by attaching MSR's Floatation Tails (\$50). The only thing testers didn't like was the toe strap, which is awkward to adjust in the field. 4.2 lbs; msrgear.com

GRIP: 4

COMFORT: 4

EASE OF USE: 3



**Cool Little Fact:** The Gold 12s are built in Boulder, Colorado, using 100 percent wind power.

### SPEED IS YOUR FRIEND

#### CRESCENT MOON GOLD 12 \$189

Racers and fitness snowshoers, these are for you. And, no, you're not missing something; there's no binding. Instead, running shoes or lightweight boots attach directly to the shoes' PVC-free decks with included, easy-to-use hardware and a couple of punches with a power drill. (Yes, it permanently trashes your shoes.) It's initially a hassle, but, then again, the Gold 12s weigh almost half as much as an average snowshoe. Testers felt they were absolutely flying on hard-packed trails. Of course, given that the spring-loaded decks kick up the soft stuff, and the small deck won't keep you atop powder, hardpack is the only place these belong. 2.4 lbs; crescentmoonsnowshoes.com

GRIP: 3

COMFORT: 5

EASE OF USE: 3.5

### BIG DADDIES

#### FABER MOUNTAIN QUEST 13X30 \$240

If these were skis, they'd be your superfat powder boards. With smaller teeth and abundant surface area, the aluminum-framed Mountain Quests easily kept testers afloat when smaller snowshoes began to sink. While it takes a bit of practice not to feel as if you're walking in flippers, they're not nearly as awkward as you might think. A slightly upcurved tail reduces drag, and the smartly crafted binding prevents shin bang. There's just enough traction to keep you sure-footed on a slope or ice, but if you're planning to race up peaks—or move quickly in general—go with another shoe. Bonus: Also available in five smaller sizes. 5.6 lbs; fabersnowshoes.com

GRIP: 3

COMFORT: 3.5

EASE OF USE: 4



**SNOWSHOE LITE** IceTrek's Diamond Grips are essentially chains for your boots. They have rustproof beads with hundreds of biting edges that slice into ice and grip on packed snow. The broad rubber band snaps securely over your shoe or boot and remains flexible even when your snot freezes. Just stay outside—they'll slice into your living room floor. \$40; icetrek.com

# 5 TIPS avalanche safety

## DOUG CHABOT

Chabot is the director of the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center. He's spent some 700 days in the backcountry studying the snowpack over the past 15 years.

**1. PREPARE:** You need a buddy, a beacon (worn over your midlayer, not in your pack), a shovel, a probe. And pack a puffy jacket (see page 64) and a fire starter. **2. PRACTICE:** Before heading out, have your buddy put his beacon inside a pack and bury it (at least three feet down), pinpoint its location with your transceiver and probe, then start digging. Another option is to head to one of 37 U.S. resorts that have beacon-training parks. If you haven't gotten pro-

fessional training yet, take an avalanche-safety course. [Locations of courses and beacon-training parks can be found at [backcountry-access.com/education](http://backcountry-access.com/education).] **3. PAY ATTENTION:** Avalanche advisories ([avalanche.org](http://avalanche.org)) are generalized, and wind, temperature change, and snowfall can alter snowpack stability within hours. Look for recent avalanche activity, collapsing or cracking snow, and other warnings. If you're skiing along flat terrain and the snow makes a *whumph* sound, Mother Nature just told you to go home. **4. WORK TOGETHER:** Travel one at a time on 25-degree or steeper slopes, and leapfrog down mountainsides so you

keep each other within sight. Don't underestimate small slopes; they can slide. Make sure everyone knows the slope's escape routes. Wait for each other out of a potential slide's pathway. **5. MOVE FAST:** If an avalanche strikes, try to ski out of its way. If it hits you, fight to get one hand out of the snow and wave your other hand in front of your face to create an air pocket. If your buddy gets hit, note where he disappears and start searching below that spot. Look for obvious clues: gloves or a pack. He has a 92 percent chance of survival if he is uninjured and you rescue him within 15 minutes. The clock is ticking. —INTERVIEW BY CHRISTINA ERB

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSS ALEXANDER LYNN

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