FIELD NOTES THE LATEST WORD FROM OUR TESTERS

PRODUCT	VERDICT	BEST FOR	TESTER DATA
Salomon XT Wings GTX	If you favor low-cuts over beefy boots—but don't want to sacrifice support or protection—check out this souped-up trail runner. The upper is a complex pattern of breathable ripstop nylon and rubbery abrasion reinforcements, with a Gore-Tex lining. The midsole is supportive and stable—especially for overpronators—and quite cushy. I was able to eat up miles on bouldery trails in Shenandoah National Park with a 20-pound pack. The thin, ultradurable metal-core laces cinch (not tie) and tuck into a tongue-top pouch. This system stayed tight and never required retying. **Pros:** the support of a hiking boot with the agility of a trail runner. **Cons:** long break-in time. **salomon.com.** *Reader service #106* **> $160** **> 2 lbs. (size 12)** **> men's 7-14; women's 5-11**	Fastpackers, rugged-trail runners, travelers who want one do-it-all shoe	**> Bremen Leak** **> Other testers** Jonathan Dorn **> Duration** July to Nov. **> Locales/conditions** Rocky and muddy trails in MD, VA, CO, Finland **> "After a 20-mile training run around Lake Jyväsjärvi in Finland, my legs were shot, but my feet felt fresh."**
Patagonia M10	For the weight of a freeze-dried dinner, this jacket brings all-season protection. I wore it as a windshell for a week of cool-weather hiking in the Alps and never overheated. Credit the three-layer (rare in a ultralight shell) fabric, which moves moisture well enough that I rarely opened the 16-inch pit zips. Those pits are mesh-lined, so they double as pockets—which creates two huge storage units without the weight of two more zippers. Other nice details: adjustable cuffs, a drawcord hem, and a roomy fit that layers over a puffy jacket. **Pros:** year-round protection at summertime weight. **Cons:** steep price. **patagonia.com.** *Reader service #107* **> $399** **> 10.5 oz. (w's M)** **> men's XS-XL; women's XS-L**	All-season hikers who want a one-shell quiver; ultralighters who need reliable weather protection for alpine conditions	**> Kristin Hostetter** **> Other testers** Kelly Bastone, Shannon Davis **> Duration** May to Nov. **> Locales/conditions** Rain, temps from 10°F to 60°F; Northeast, Rockies, Alps **> "The hood cinches over a helmet and down to a gasket around your face with one drawstring pull."**
Black Diamond Octane/Spark	This daypack handles up to 20 pounds on a hardware-laden dayhike or summit attempt. But it also has a killer four-strap compression system that lets you shrink it for shorter jaunts. The frame is a standard plastic sheet surrounded by an aluminum skeleton that connects via a ball and socket to the hipbelt. This creates a fulcrum in the lumbar area that rotates in all directions, creating a very dynamic suspension that stuck like glue when I was stemming through slot canyons in southern Utah. **Pros:** snug fit, excellent load support. **Cons:** heavy for its size; Allen key required to adjust torso length. **bdel.com.** *Reader service #108* **> $140** **> 3 lbs. (w's)** **> 28 to 30 liters** **> 2 men's and 2 women's sizes**	Anyone looking for a versatile daypack with excellent weight transfer and a suspension that adjusts to fit a wide variety of torsos	**> Kristin Hostetter** **> Other testers** Shannon Davis **> Duration** May to Nov. **> Locales/conditions** Canyons, glaciers, peaks; UT, MA, Alps, Longs Peak **> "Once you dial in the torso size, there's some hip swivel that actually makes loads feel lighter."**
First Ascent Guide Gloves	Want a superb technical glove for mountaineering, skiing, and winter camping? These Pittards leather gloves are soft enough for nose-wiping yet tough enough for ice axes and high-friction rappels; for grip and dexterity, leather this supple has few equals. Inside, a merino wool lining kept my palms dry and didn't catch when I slid wet hands in and out. A wide, adjustable, elastic cuff helps there; it also seals tight against spindrift. Insulated with PrimaLoft, the Guides are warm well below freezing if you're active. **Pros:** impeccable fit and great dexterity. **Cons:** The water-resistant leather wets out after prolonged rain or slush. **firstascent.com.** *Reader service #109* **> $119** **> 6.7 oz. (m's L)** **> XS-XL**	Mountaineering, backcountry skiing, and tool-intensive cold-weather trips	**> Jonathan Dorn** **> Other testers** Shannon Davis **> Duration** Aug. to Dec. **> Locales/conditions** Alps, Rockies; six types of snow **> "In subzero windchills, you can't afford to take your gloves off to fiddle with gear. The Guides have the touch you need."**
Exped Explorer Poles	These four-section aluminum poles were perfect for my Long Trail thru-hike, because they're lighter than many carbon-fiber models and collapse to a mere 20.5 inches. The adjustments are rock-solid, with a push-button on the bottom section and twist-locks on top. The long foam grip let me adjust my hand position during steep traverses. **Pros:** bomber, ultralight, and green, thanks to DAC Featherlight aluminum. **Cons:** The push-button is tough to operate with cold fingers. **outdoorresearch.com.** *Reader service #110* **> $125** **> 15 oz.** **> adjusts from 20.5 to 51 inches**	Taller hikers, ultralighters	**> Berne Broudy** **> Other testers** Aaron Loomis, Emily Steers **> Duration** May to Nov. **> Locales/conditions** VT, Alps; on and off trail **> "They come with wide winter baskets, a nice perk for ski season."**

PHOTOS BY JOHN HARLIN (TOP); COURTESY (8)