

10 top gear items for the slopes

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Lightweight. Versatile. Fun. Traits that apply to much of this year’s new winter gear, from skis to the latest adventure watch, backcountry pack, and snowboard-learning tool. Some of our favorite picks work for year-round adventures, too. Here’s a look at some of the season’s newest toys.

These skis are beauties — and fun, too
You’ll likely cringe when you first scratch your new Icelantic skis: They look more like artwork than high-performance planks, with stunning graphics by Travis Parr, a California-based artist and one of Icelantic’s cofounders. This year’s collection of skis, designed and handmade in Denver, includes the new women’s Riveter line, which comes in 85 and 95 versions (with the Pioneer 86 and 96 as the men’s equivalent). With its rockered tip and tail, and 5mm of camber underfoot, the all-mountain Riveter 95 can handle everything from crust to fresh powder. The handmade core — crafted from sustainably harvested poplar wood — adds rigidity for more control and helps reduce chatter, and the shorter sidecut radius guides you through tighter turns. These lightweight tapered skis can handle powder, too, and offer playfulness and pop on terrain features. If the graphics and performance don’t make you a believer, embrace the company’s three-year no-questions-asked warranty. \$649. www.icelanticskis.com



Slay the powder on this board
Weston’s Japow snowboard isn’t new this season, but the company has added two new sizes, 154cm and 164cm, opening a world of playful surfing to smaller riders. With its big nose, backseat stance, and swallowtail shape, this board is built for powder. Even if you can’t make it to Hokkaido — legendary for its deep fluff — you’ll love the floaty feel of the Japow on a powder day (Japow is a portmanteau of “Japan powder”). The board, made by Colorado-based Weston Snowboards, has a bamboo and poplar core and a durable snow-shedding top-sheet that’s made from castor beans. It has rockered tips and a slight camber in the middle, meaning it still knows how to carve. It also comes in 159cm and 169cm. \$599. 970-827-4060, www.weston-snowboards.com



An adventure watch for the slopes
Strap on Garmin’s new fenix 6 Pro watch and you can easily navigate the slopes. The adventure watch includes trail maps for more than 2,000 ski resorts worldwide — from Portillo in Chile to Sugarloaf — meaning you can track your route and avoid getting lost. Maps include trail names and difficulty ratings, so you don’t end up on a more advanced slope by accident. Ski mode provides the details of each alpine run you take, recording time, speed, vertical descent, distance, and more. For Nordic skiers, XC Ski mode records total ascent, distance, and time, and displays compass settings and elevation. Off the slopes, the watch provides fitness, performance, and other metrics for hiking, golfing, running, paddling, and many other sports. The fenix 6 Pro and (for smaller wrists) 6S Pro have WiFi capability, and let you download music onto the watch or play tunes from music services. \$699. www.garmin.com



Embrace this smartphone protector
Hopefully you’re not one of the unfortunate souls who has dropped a cellphone off the chairlift or into deep snow. If you are — or have ever come close to doing that — you’ll appreciate this device: Hangtime’s KOALA smartphone leash has a silicone harness that stretches around and cradles your phone, and a coiled tether with a strong crocodile clip that attaches to your winter jacket or backpack. If your phone accidentally plunges from the safety of your hand or pocket, the KOALA prevents it from dropping and getting broken or lost. The tether stretches to 4 feet for selfies, but recoils when released to keep your phone from hitting the ground. The KOALA fits virtually all smartphones, with or without a case. \$25 (\$15 until Dec. 1). www.hangtimegear.com



Shoulder this bag in the backcountry
Throw your skis or splitboard and backcountry gear into Dakine’s Signature Poacher Backpack and you’re set for a full-day wilderness adventure. The 32-liter pack keeps your gear organized and within easy reach. Carry your skis on the sides of the pack — A-frame style — and secure your helmet on the back using the stow-away mesh holster—or strap your skis or snowboard on the back. Goggles fit in a fleece-lined pocket on top, while snow shovel, probe, and first aid supplies remain easily accessible in the front compartment. Flip the bag over to access another cavernous zippered compartment — good for holding a hydration pack (in the built-in sleeve), snacks, and winter layers. The lightly padded waist belt also has a zippered pouch on one side for keeping a pocketknife, compass, or trail bar handy. The only downside: This one-size-fits-all pack can be a bit oversize for smaller adventurers. \$195. www.dakine.com

Bindings and skis for the backcountry
Marker overhauled its popular Kingpin touring bindings this year and has released the new Kingpin M-Werks 12. The binding has fewer springs than its predecessor and anti-ice pads for shedding snow and ice. It also has a stiff, carbon-reinforced toe and heel design and a thinner and more ergonomic ski/walk lever to help reduce weight (just 22 ounces per binding) and provide better power transfer. DIN setting ranges from 5 to 12. Put them on Volkl’s new V-Werks Mantra, an all-mountain freeride ski that can handle everything from powder to icy slopes. The skis have a wood core and incorporate carbon fiber and Titanal materials into their design, making them lightweight but stiff enough for hard-charging shredders. They have rockered tips and tails, measure 99mm underfoot, and have a longer turning radius; they come in 170cm to 186cm lengths. Attach your skins using the incorporated “skin pin.” \$729 M-Werks, choose 100mm or 125mm brake widths; \$1,149 V-Werks Mantra. www.marker.net, www.volkl.com



A boot geared to women
Tecnica’s new Mach series of women’s boots aren’t just smaller versions of men’s boots. They’re the outcome of research conducted by Tecnica, with US headquarters in West Lebanon, N.H., and researchers at a university in Verona, Italy. The idea: to create women’s ski boots that promote a more natural stance and better performance, and suit women’s feet. This year’s new Mach 1 LV Pro women’s boot has a new 98mm last designed for women with low-volume feet, a fully customizable liner and shell (take them to The Ski Monster in Boston and a technician will dial in your fit), and a Cuff Adapt System that adjusts to fit women with different size calves. With a 115 flex, these stiff boots work best for more advanced and aggressive skiers. They have four adjustable buckles and a power lock strap for securing the perfect fit, and a liner and cuff made from lambswool and a breathable synthetic material that add comfort and warmth. Don’t worry, guys, there’s a new men’s boot, too: the Mach 1 LV 130 with the same customizable liner and shell. \$840. www.tecnicasports.com



Snowboard learning made easy
The clever new Burton Handlebar will have your budding ripper making turns in no time. This grab bar is shaped like an “n” with two sturdy platforms on the bottom that attach to the snowboard in place of bindings. Your child balances his or her feet on the platforms and holds onto the top of the foam-padded bar. The device provides stability and helps beginners learn balance, develop good body position, and turn with confidence as they discover how to control the board. The bar works with any 80cm to 110cm snowboard and all snow boots, and it’s adjustable to accommodate your sprouting snowboarder — it extends from about 20 inches to 24½ inches high. \$99.95. www.burton.com



Stay connected and safe with this radio
Good tools for communication prove essential in the wilderness, whether you’re skiing, snowshoeing, or snowmobiling. BCA’s powerful new BC Link 2.0 radio helps adventurers keep in contact with each other and share real-time information on snow conditions, best routes, and hazards. The durable 2-watt radio offers up to 6 miles of range, depending on the terrain, and more than 20 channels. Stow the base unit in your pocket or pack and clip the Smart Mic unit to your shoulder strap. The Smart Mic has volume and channel selection dials and a push-to-talk button that’s accessible even with gloves on. The speaker also fends off snow, allowing for crisp communication even when it’s dumping out. The 2300mAh lithium-ion battery lasts for days (and recharges using a micro-USB cord), and the easy-to-read battery indicator lets you keep tabs on battery life. The radio also comes in handy for hiking, boating, and other adventures. \$179.95 per radio. www.backcountryaccess.com

An all-mountain ski for mini shredders
Kids like to explore, and LINE’s new Ruckus ski lets them tackle all sorts of terrain. This twin-tip ski has a rockered tip and tail, and camber under foot, meaning it carves well on groomers, offers a playful ride with added control in the terrain park, and holds on tight across the mountain, but it isn’t for hard-charging kiddos. With its soft to medium flex, it’s geared more to intermediate and advanced-intermediate skiers who want to play while still maintaining control. The Ruckus has a lightweight but durable Aspen veneer core, and comes in 135mm, 145mm, and 155mm lengths, making them ideal for shredders ranging from about 4 feet 9 inches to 5 feet 2 inches. \$299.99. www.lineskis.com

