

Gearing up for downhill thrills

New lines focus on performance, green technology

By Kari Bodnarchuk
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This year's new ski and snowboard equipment reflects a burst of innovation and a focus on green products. Almost every manufacturer has incorporated rocker, or reverse camber, into its skis or snowboards, and many have created products that can perform both at the resort and in the backcountry. These new skis and boards can float on powder, carve on groomers, and maintain control regardless of the terrain. Other products offer improved comfort and convenience, from jackets with built-in heaters to poles with quick-release straps. We've highlighted a few of this season's top gear picks.

Power up

If the cold sapped your cell-phone battery or your body's core temperature while you were on the slopes, you would typically head indoors. With Mountain Hardwear's Radiance (women's) and Refugium (men's) jackets, which have onboard power systems, you can charge your cell-phone, MP3 player, GPS, and other devices and maintain a toasty torso while you're on the go. Each jacket contains a thin, flexible battery pack that tucks into a hidden pouch in the upper back. This powers the heating coils in the chest and back areas and the fixed plug in your left-hand pocket. The sys-



Mountain Hardwear's Refugium

tem functions at minus-30 degrees and offers two heat settings that will keep your body temperature regulated for half- or full-day ski sessions. Plug the battery pack into a wall jack to recharge. The jackets sell for \$550 each, including the battery pack and accessory charger.

Outdoor Sports Center, 80 Danbury Road, Wilton, Conn., 203-762-8797, www.outdoorsports.com; www.mountainhardwear.com, 800-953-8375

Made for walking

When you're not tearing up the slopes, Lange's Super Blaster ski boots keep you from tripping up, whether you're navigating the base lodge or hiking through the backcountry. The boots come with a new feature called the Climatic Cuff-Release System. Flip the second buckle forward and it releases the upper cuff, "unlocking" the boot and enabling you to stand upright and easily walk or hike. The new ultra-grip rubber soles keep you from slipping when you're walking around the village and they absorb shock

when you're skiing. The \$499 boots are unisex, but look for a women's version next year.

Wilderness House, Boston, 1048 Commonwealth Ave., 617-277-5858, www.wildernesshouse.com, www.langeskiiboots.com, 888-243-6722

Helmet-friendly

At last, goggles that are made to be worn with helmets. Oakley's uniquely shaped Splice goggles fit comfortably over your helmet without pinching your nose or blocking your view. They have an internal frame system that opens up the area around your nose, reducing the pressure and letting



Lange's Super Blaster

you breathe more easily. They also have "fins" or strap outriggers that keep the head strap away from your face and the edges of the goggle out of peripheral view. The goggles, which cost up to \$140, are available with a choice of 11 interchangeable dual-vented, anti-fog lenses but are not made for smaller faces.

Joe Jones Ski and Sports, 2709 White Mountain Highway, North Conway, N.H., 603-356-9411, www.joejonessports.com, www.oakley.com, 800-431-1439

Click and release

Leki's latest line of poles has a strap system that functions like a binding for your ski poles and gives you significantly more power and control, not to mention a slick, quick-release feature. The Trigger S grip system incorporates a low-profile, V-shaped "harness" that Velcros into place around your hand for a comfortably snug fit. A small rope loop on the strap between your thumb and forefinger slips over a plastic tab on the pole and clicks into place. When you need to remove your hand from the pole, push down on an easy-to-access release on top of the handle and the rope slips off the plastic tab. The harness remains strapped to your glove or mitten. The women's-specific Flair S (\$99) has a smaller, ergonomic grip and a 14mm aluminum shaft, and the Carbon 14S (\$129) is a 14mm



The Glove Dryer sits atop a vent or radiator and allows the air to flow into the wet mitts.

TOP PICKS

See the latest gear at www.boston.com/ski.

carbon fiber pole.

Boston Ski Market, 860 Commonwealth Ave., 617-731-6100, www.skimarket.com; www.leki.com, 716-683-1022

Ski by satellite

Satsports Multi-Sports GPS unit may knock your ski socks off. You can download a resort's detailed trail map onto the unit for free. Then the \$490 Satski GPS System will display your location on that map and help you navigate the slopes, even taking you from point A to point B while avoiding expert runs, for instance. At the same time, the unit records your skiing or snowboarding statistics for the day, including current, maximum, and average speed; overall and skied distance; and current altitude and overall vertical ascent and descent. If you get lost, just hit the "locate me" button, and at the end of the day, push the "replay" button to review the day's routes. Downloads also include resort information such as restaurants, rental shops, ski schools, and emergency contacts. The best part: You don't have to be an uber-techie to work the device. Off season, use the GPS unit while golfing, biking, hiking, or walking.



Satski GPS System

www.satsportsgps.com

Twin-edged trickster

Dynastar's new 6th Sense Superpipe can handle double the wear and tear when you're landing big jumps or grinding rails,



Oakley's Splice goggles offer an improved view on the slopes.

thanks to its double set of edges. Besides the traditional side edges, it has an additional set of metal edges on the bottom that run the length of the skis. These help spread your load, boost durability, and keep you from continually ripping out your skis' side edges. The \$399 Superpipe has a wood core and Spring Blade technology that lets you catch more air and hit a softer landing.

Strand's Ski Shop, 1 West Boylston Drive, Worcester, 508-852-4333, strands-ski-shop.com; www.dynastar.com, 888-243-6722

A better board

Arbor's fully redesigned Draft snowboard offers park riders a buttery feel and a looser touch. That means you can add more style to your tricks, but still nail your landings. This twin-tip, freestyle board has a reverse camber shape, added contact points in front of and behind your boots that help you hold an edge (that's Arbor's own Grip-Tech sidecut), and bronze edges that are

softer and more forgiving when you're grinding rails. It also comes with 14 mounting holes that let you widen your stance and remain more stable while spinning. This \$395 board works best in the park, but can hold an edge on groomers and float in powder. Look for the women's version next year. Like the rest of Arbor's boards, the Draft's wood core comes from sustainably produced poplar that has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Eastern Boarder, 254 Daniel Webster Highway, Nashua, N.H., 603-888-0722, www.easternboarder.com; www.arborsports.com, 310-577-1120.

Less drip, more dry

The cone-shaped, plastic Glove Dryer, made by Rocket Dry in upstate New York, perches on top of radiators and floor vents or affixes to wall vents and baseboard heaters with the attached hook. Place mittens or gloves over the dryer and it spreads them open, allowing air to better circulate through the dryer's open slits. Your gloves and mittens will dry significantly faster than if you placed them directly on a vent. At \$9.99 per pair, the dryers make great stocking stuffers.

www.theglovedryer.com, 888-379-4568

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