

This season’s coolest gear for skiers and boarders

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Much of this year's ski and snowboard gear does double duty, integrating several products into one: helmets with built-in goggles, gloves with cellphone capabilities, and ski poles that can help you maintain balance, tweak your ski settings, support your video camera, and pop open your Samuel Adams at the end of the day. You will also still see an emphasis on eco-friendly, natural products and, of course, comfort. Here are some of our top picks of fun, yet functional, gear for the upcoming season.



Pole with purpose

Forget packing a multi-tool for your mountain adventure. Just grab your CHAR Poles and go. These multi-tasking ski poles, designed in Salt Lake City, come with optional Phillips and flat-head screwdrivers that thread into the grips, a

bottle opener cleverly incorporated into the ski baskets, and a universal mount for attaching a camera. When selecting a pole, choose from one of four ski baskets — for powder, all mountain, park, or “sober” skiing (hint: no bottle opener) — and then select the color baskets and grips, and the shaft length from 90 to 130 centimeters. When the snow melts, take the poles on your hikes. 801-641-2131, www.charpoles.com

Gloves made for talking

Keep your cellphone tucked away and your friends at your fingertips with Swan's new G-Cell gloves. These high-tech hand-warmers synch with your cellphone using Bluetooth and let you answer and make calls with the push of a button or using voice command. The back of the right glove sports two easy-to-use, glove-friendly buttons that let you wirelessly connect to your cellphone, field and initiate calls, and adjust volume. Once paired with your audio device, just talk into the small microphone located on the back of your thumb and listen through the speaker above that. The wrist area vibrates and a button lights up



when you have an incoming call. You won't sacrifice function for fancy features: The super comfy gloves have a waterproof soft-shell exterior, leather fingers and palms for good grip, and wrist pulls for keeping out snow. They come in men's and women's sizes. The only downside: They will likely cost more than your cellphone. \$495. 518-725-3333, www.swanycamerica.com

Boots made for walking, and all-mountain performance

A skier's biggest challenge: finding boots comfortable enough to withstand hours of playtime, and to maneuver between car, lodge, and slopes with ease. Apex has solved this problem with ski boots that ingeniously blend the comfort of a snowboard boot and the stiffness of a ski boot shell. The high-end, high-performance ML-2 (women's) and MC-2 (men's) come with a super-cushioned boot, much like a snowboard boot, that fits inside either a stiff carbon chassis or a less-expensive composite frame that helps the boot maintain rigidity and the skier maintain control. They come with two micro-adjustable buckles, two Boa closures, and a heat-moldable liner so you can dial in the perfect fit. After your final run, slip off the boot's outer shell and wander back to the lodge for some après-ski fun. \$995-\$1,295. 888-669-7542, www.apexski boots.com



sponsive on the slopes. Cudmore started making skis in his Glenwood Springs garage in 2009, creating about 15 pairs that year. Now he has five employees at Meier Skis, and plans to make about 400 pairs of skis and 350 snowboards this season. Check out The Doc (men's) and BNK (women's) all-mountain skis — named after Doc Holliday and his notorious girlfriend, Big Nose Kate — both of which have traditional camber underfoot, a rise in the tips and, new this year, a wood and carbon fiber core, making them stronger, stiffer, and more playful than ever. Meier Skis can also put your custom graphics on the skis. The Doc (\$790) and BNK (\$690). 970-510-0029, www.meierskis.com



Smart video camera comes loaded

Capture your cold-weather adventures with Garmin's new VIRB Elite high-definition video camera, which easily mounts to your ski helmet or CHAR Poles and can be controlled by any Garmin ANT device (the company's wireless transfer technology), such as its



Fenix GPS watch. The durable, waterproof camera has a nice low profile and a 1.4-inch LCD screen so you can actually see what you're shooting, the amount of time left, battery power, and camera settings, for instance. It shoots 16-megapixel still images even when recording full 1080-pixel high-def video, and has an impressive ultra wide-angle view. The camera's Wi-Fi feature lets you connect to the Garmin app on your Apple or Android phone. It also has a built-in GPS to track and record your routes, and an altimeter and accelerometer for tracking your rate of descent and speed. Synch the VIRB Elite with your Garmin heart-rate monitor to track your heart rate while tearing down the slopes, and use your Fenix watch to start and stop recording with the push of a button. Coolest feature: The VIRB Elite automatically stops recording when you jump on the chairlift and then starts up again when you hop off and start descending. VIRB Elite \$399.99; Fenix GPS watch, \$399.99. 800-800-1020, www.garmin.com

A sleek and sizable gear closet for your car

Put all your precious gear in Thule's new Sonic 635S roof box, which comes in moderate to cavernous sizes to best match your car type and packing habits. The mid-size Sonic XL does the job for weekend adventures and longer getaways, swallowing several hefty suitcases and a variety of smaller suitcases and duffel bags, or else half a dozen skis or snowboards with room for boot bags and slope-side accessories. The box goes on quickly and easily, attaching to Thule's new Aero-blade bars, and opens on both sides for easy access to your gear. The Sonic's sleek and aero shape eliminates whistling or other wind-induced noise and helps keep gas stops to a minimum. The blunt-shape stern allows you to freely open your hatch without interference. The box comes in large (\$549.95) to “extra extra large” (\$719.95), and is available through EMS and REL. 800-238-2388, www.thule.com



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