

Mountain Smith

It is one of the easier traps to fall into. And especially in a market as densely packed with brands and technology as this is. The trap? To believe that the market has reached saturation point. That rather like the grotesque Mr Creosote, forcing one final chocolate down his gaping maw in Monty Python's film, *The Meaning of Life*, should the outdoor market have to accommodate one more new brand or product, it too, will burst. Admittedly, it is hard to imagine where all this kit goes. Surely, one reasons, the buying public will reach satiation some day? Well, that only holds true if you think capitalism is finished, which even in these grey times is clearly not the case. So welcome to Mountain Smith, a new offering in rucksacks. And they are welcome, because this is no a badge engineered wannabee, designed by plagiarists and cobbled together in some Burmese sweatshop. Mountain Smith has serious pedigree stateside and comes to the UK courtesy of distributors Big Bear Sports.

£ RRP: N/a 0208 991 9244 mitch@bigbear.co.uk
 Mitch Terlecky

The North Face

There are two ways of looking at The North Face. Rampaging bully boys intent on outdoor domination or smart marketers with a real feel for what the public wants. Of course they're both. If you are going to steer a brand to huge profits you're going to need Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde sharing the driving. And in the Apex Valkyrie jacket you can see Doctor Jekyll at work. Google this product and you will find it referred to more than once as "immensely desirable". Now that's not normally an epithet you'd apply to an outdoor jacket – a cutting edge laptop maybe, an expensively styled sports car certainly, but a jacket? And yet, it is. It's difficult to say how this trick is done, for in terms of construction and specification the Valkyrie is a good example of soft shell, possibly a great one, but that doesn't even get to close to explaining its desirability. As the Americans say – go figure.

£ RRP: £160 01539 738882 uksales@vfc.com
 Andy Barker

Peak Performance

Peak Performance's pedigree in the snowsports market is exceptional and well founded on a range of outstanding gear. Being Swedish the quality is, as you might expect, pretty breathtaking. And it is not just in snowsports that it has made its mark. Tapping into the early nineties Scandinavian golf boom, it has built up big export markets all round the world. Now it is limbering up to do something similar in outdoor here and you wouldn't bet against them making a fairly big splash, not if they produce for the outdoor sector, products like this women's Crevasse jacket. And especially not if they are willing to put the same kind of marketing oomph into outdoor as they do into snow and which sees them this autumn forking out for colour ads in magazines as diverse as *Vogue* and *Men's Health*. This is one to watch.

£ RRP £285 0208 875 5874
 www.peakperformance.com Simon Walker

Garmin

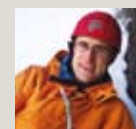
There's a historical trend that occurs as new technology develops – things get smaller. Computers, once the size of a stately home, now slip neatly inside a small satchel, mobile phones, once the size of a large house brick are now only marginally larger than a box of matches. While generally, 'smallerisation', as we have christened it, is a good thing, there is a worry that things are going to far. Phones risk becoming invisible to the naked eye and computers are so tiddley that one needs fingers the size of a three-year-old to operate the key pad efficiently. Recently Garmin has reduced the size of the GPS in the shape of the Foretrex series, which allow the user to view their current location in multiple formats. The Foretrex 401 model here (and the 301 version) also incorporate a trip computer, sunrise/sunset and hunting/fishing information and can connect to PC or Mac via USB connection. The 401 also has an electronic compass and a barometric altimeter and allows you to wirelessly share routes, tracks and waypoints with other Garmin devices. Very clever, but, let's hope 'smallerisation' stops there, a GPS chip that inserts into the brain, operated by inserting a finger up the left nostril would be taking things a little far in our book.

£ RRP: £199.99 01752 241010
 sales@smgeurope.com Kevin Turner



Alec Rycroft's Four Outdoor Favourites

Alec Rycroft is owner of the Walking Shop in Leyburn North Yorkshire, which he runs with the full time assistance of his brother Olly and various part-time staff including wife, Emma. A marketing graduate, Alec spent the first few years of his working life in Zermatt before returning to the UK, where he quickly tired of wearing a suit, deciding in 2003 to return to his native Wensleydale and open a specialist outdoor shop. The years since then have seen steady growth, both for the shop premises and the online business. Alec is an outdoor all rounder enjoying walking, climbing, mountain biking, sailing and skiing.



Montane Featherlite Smock

The Facts: Designed for footwear with removable insole • Maximizes support • Maximizes shock absorption • Ideal for medium to high arch shaped feet • Recommended for ski, snowboarding, running, hiking, and walking footwear.



Alec says: "These weigh less than 100g and pack down to the size of an apple. Surprisingly versatile and offer more protection than you might imagine."

Keen Women's Whisper

The Facts: Designed for use in and out of water with washable polyester webbing with aegis microbe shield • Compression molded EVA low profile midsole for lightness with a metatomical footbed • Patented slimline toe protection • RRP £60 for spring 2010 • Available in 7 colours.



Alec says: "These have flown out of the shop the summer. A more feminine style than most Keen products and the colour has been a winner."

Engo Blister Prevention Patches

The Facts: Low-friction patches manufactured with pressure sensitive adhesive that are applied direct to the footwear or insole and not to the skin • three pack sizes: • Intro pack - 2 large ovals - rrp £4.84 • Six pack - 4 large ovals, 2 small ovals - rrp £11.94 • Club pack - 30 large ovals - rrp £41.99 • Small oval measures 51mm x 38mm • Large oval measures 70mm x 44mm.



Alec says: "A really simple idea that works - just stick them inside your footwear and say goodbye to blisters."

Petzl Ultra

The Facts: Ultra high-output regulated lighting 350 lumens • constant lighting level, automatically switches to reserve power mode when battery pack is almost discharged • high-output rechargeable battery pack (Lithium Ion 2000 mAh) • lighting duration of 1h30 in maximum mode, plus 30 minutes in reserve power mode • test button for rechargeable battery with battery level indicator • bulb does not need to be replaced • headtorch and rechargeable batteries are guaranteed for 3 years • light body can be tilted vertically to change light direction • Weight: 345g (headtorch with ACCU 2 ULTRA battery pack) • 3-year guarantee.



Alec says: "As the nights begin to close in, so our head torch sales are starting to pick up, and these have sold surprisingly well considering the eye watering price."