

SUMMER GEAR REVIEWS



MAESTRO

ZEAL OPTICS MAESTRO

\$130, www.zealoptics.com

These distinctive polarized glasses from Moab-based Zeal Optics are a winning recipe of vision-sharpening lens technology, sculpted eye protection, solid-lightweight frames and go-anywhere style. Zeal's new ZB-13 copper-tint polarized polycarbonate lenses enhance visual acuity the moment you slide them on. From bright sun to lowlight conditions, your world suddenly has a bit more 3D pop to it. On medium to wide faces, the large lenses wrap around to protect the eyes from peripheral glare and wind on speedy bike descents, yet aren't so big to give you that bug-like alien appearance. The cost-to-quality ratio of the Maestro is very favorable. No wonder Outside magazine gave it their 2006 Gear of the Year award. Big kudos for this upstart company from the sun-washed redrock country of southern Utah. – PG



FORTRESS DROP WATCH

\$125, Men's and Women's,
www.fortressworldwide.com

If you're looking for an Inspector Gadget-type watch, look elsewhere. But for outdoor types who want a durable, simple watch, Fortress timepieces are stylish, utilitarian and water tested to 100 meters. No altimeter, barometer or heart-rate function here -- just watches built to tell the time while taking a beating. Constructed with marine-grade stainless steel and scratch-resistant hardened mineral crystal glass, you can climb, kayak, backpack and bike without worrying about damaging your timepiece. Luminescent hands and markers help keep you on time when the sun goes down. – Cathy Claesson



OUTDOOR RESEARCH DRY COMP SUMMIT PACK

\$59, www.orgear.com

Time and again when planning a trip, I'm confronted with a dilemma: How to get all my basecamp gear into the backcountry without having to use that same big, heavy pack for day jaunts. Often I end up carrying two packs: the Mother Pack and the Summit Shuttle. Here's a sleeker, lighter-weight solution from the clever folks at Outdoor Research in Seattle. The Dry Comp Summit Pack (12.2 oz., 1885 cubic inches) does double duty: On the trip in it performs the duties of a compression sack, big enough for a sleeping bag and down jacket. The waterproof fabric, fully-taped seams and dry-bag style roll-top closure keep your feathers dry. Once at camp, presto change-o: the compression straps convert to shoulder straps and a waist belt. You've got your summit-assault vehicle, complete with dual daisy chains, ice axe loops and mesh water-bottle pockets. – PG



MOUNTAIN KHAKIS ORIGINAL MOUNTAIN PANT

\$69.95, www.mountainkhakis.com

Even if you don't fly fish and ride horses and live in the mountains, you can stand in the pants of those that do. Mountain Khakis are designed for and inspired by the outdoor lifestyle of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. They're granite-tough, made from triple-stitched 10.4 oz cotton duck canvas that is extremely abrasion resistant, yet not too heavy. The pre-washed and brushed fabric offers next-to-skin comfort and an "action gusset" crotch provides leg-swinging freedom of movement when saddling up on that stool at the brew pub. Shorts and women's styles also available. – PG

LIGHTWEIGHT SHELTERS



Hennessy Hammock

HENNESSY HAMMOCK ULTRALITE BACKPACKER A-SYM

\$169, www.hennessyhammock.com

Travel light, sleep well with this ingenious multi-function shelter that weighs a mere 1 lb. 15 oz. and takes the place of a tent and sleeping pad. You might think that camping in a hammock would limit your campsite choices, but wherever there are

trees (i.e. the Sierra, the Trinity Alps, the redwoods – most places we backpack in California other than the desert) there's no need to search for a flat, dry tent site. You can now sleep on a rocky 45-degree slope or over a mud patch. And you won't wake up to find that you've slid off into the corner of your tent or that there's a rock poking you in the back. On the market since 1999 and awarded several patents, the Hennessy Hammock is much more than a suspended nylon net. It features an asymmetrical shape that allows you to sleep in a diagonal position that helps support the lower back and the back of your legs while providing more usable space in the hammock. The fly is also cut on an asymmetric axis so it covers your head and your feet. It can be rigged so that when it rains it automatically lowers the fly and the runoff fills your water bottles. Now that's a cool trick! The hammock is designed to take the guesswork out of set-up; you get the right amount of curvature for sleeping – not too flat, not too deep – every time you pitch

it. One-inch webbing straps protect the trees you swing from and the only ground disturbance comes from your feet, so this is truly a low-impact shelter. – Pete Gauvin



GOLITE HEX 3

\$230, www.golite.com

This featherweight teepee-style shelter provides a lot of usable space (65 square feet) for minimal weight (2 lb. 15 oz. with pole and stakes) and is ultra versatile. It's ideal for spring/summer yo-yo skiing on Shasta, overnight river trips and southern Sierra peak bagging. It's grand space for two people with gear; three without. The floorless design allows you to pitch it over rocks or dig out sleeping benches and a foot trough when camping on snow. An adjustable aluminum pole is included, but you can save 14 oz. by using a trekking pole or paddle to pitch it, or simply hang it from a tree with its top loop. Twin roof vents provide air flow. For use in buggy conditions, you'll want to spring for the Hex 3 Nest (\$100, 2 lb. 6 oz.), which can be used alone on mild, starry nights. – PG



PRINCETON TEC QUAD HEADLAMP

\$30, www.princetontec.com

The Quad is the lightest and most compact of Princeton Tec's regulated-burn headlamps. Powered by four ultrabright LEDs, it provides constant brightness even as battery power wanes (up to 50 hours on low). A low-battery meter keeps you posted. The waterproof housing will survive submersions up to one meter, thus it's a great light for boaters who may be caught out after dark. Three power modes (high, low and flash) make it perfect for use in camp and bright enough for running on dark trails. Three AAA alkaline batteries included; switch to lithium batteries to reduce weight and increase burn times. – PG



LOTUS DESIGNS P-VEST

\$180, www.lotusdesigns.com

Sometimes it's good to have a little extra flotation in your PFD, like when your navigating boulder-choked Sierra rivers at high flows. Lotus Designs P-Vest is a bomber swiftwater rescue life jacket that gives you that capability. Just place the optional P-Vest Implant (\$21.95) in the large zippered chest pocket for an extra 2 lbs. 8 oz. of flotation to its standard 16 lbs. 4 oz. A shoulder-harness rated to 1,200 pounds and a quick-release rescue belt with stainless-steel O-ring round out the safety features. Yet even with all that, this is no bulky, high-riding PFD. The P-Vest rides low and offers excellent mobility for river-running and playing. Internal neoprene hand pockets provide a place to stick cold digits when running icy snowmelt in deep, shaded canyons. With highly visible reflective tape, it works equally well for sea touring. A side-zipper offer easy entry or just open the straps and pull it over your head. – PG



TOPEAK FLASH STAND

\$30, www.topeak.com

The Flash Stand (500 grams) is a small, portable, exceedingly handy bike stand to have at home or in your car for performing minor bike tune-ups. The folding two-legged contraption supports the bottom bracket and grips the down tube to prop up the rear wheel for easy maintenance. Stows in its own storage bag. – PG



SUMMER SHOWER FROM ADVANCED ELEMENTS

\$20, www.summershower.com

A warm shower is never far away when you're traveling with the Summer Shower. Made by Advanced Elements, the Bay Area-based inflatable kayak company, the Summer Shower comes in three sizes: 5 gallons, 3 gallons and a 2.5 gallon backpacker model. Take it to the beach for a fresh-water rinse after surfing or camping to wash off sweat and trail dust. Efficient four-ply construction includes an insulator panel, reflector panel and solar panel to quickly heat water in the sun. Features an easy-to-use shower head, water temperature gauge, mirror and soap pockets ... so you can stay out longer and come home smelling fresh. Rolls up after use for compact storage. – PG



BELL SWEEP XC HELMET

\$140, www.bellbikeshelmets.com

The Sweep XC is a sweet-fitting, well-ventilated helmet for mountain and road riders. Bell's variable position visor allows for 15 degrees of vertical adjustment or snaps off for road use. A dial at the back provides one-hand fit adjustment and 20 breezy vents cool hot heads. Tips the scales at 309 grams. – PG

FOOTWEAR



CHACO ZX/1 UNAWEEP

\$95, www.chacousa.com

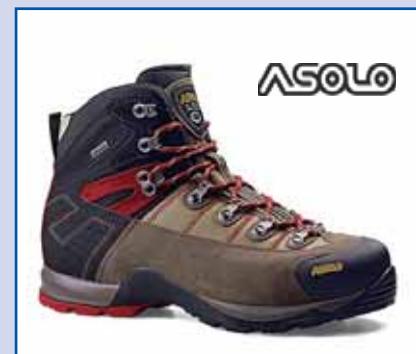
The Chaco faithful, as fervent and loyal a crowd as the footwear world has ever seen, must have been on the edge of their collective soles upon learning that the Buddha of river sandals was tinkering with their tough, time-tested resoleable treads. Not to worry. The changes are an improvement, but the Zen soul of the sandals remains pure. To its traditional Z1 (no toe loop) and Z2 (toe loop) models, Chaco has added the ZX/1 and the ZX/2, featuring two narrow straps rather than one wider strap, which Chaco says will more accurately conform to the curvatures of your feet. Perhaps. At least, they'll add visual interest. Of greater consequence is that Chaco has lightened its soles on most models by 20 percent – without changing its supportive footbeds. The UnawEEP outsole is a hybrid of the former Colorado (river-use) and Terreno (hiking) outsoles, providing the slip resistance of the former and the trail traction of the latter. It's non-marking. For stickier grip, climbers and paddlers can opt for the Diamond Stealth outsole. The changes should bring more disciples to Chaco's devoted ranks. – PG



SALOMON FUSION

\$120, www.salomonoutdoor.com

Jackets, pants and now shoes ... It was only a matter of time before softshell technology would drop to your feet. Salomon's Fusion (and the Symbio women's model) feature a stitchless softshell material that provides enviable levels of water resistance and breathability that heretofore have been impossible to achieve in one shoe. Although marketed as a lightweight hiking shoe, the Fusion's feel more like cushioned trail runners. Cinch up the nifty Quickfit laces and wander the trails, wet or dry. In summer conditions, the softshell uppers keep your dogs from overheating and dust from penetrating your socks. Clean styling looks good in town, too. – PG



ASOLO FUGITIVE GTX

\$170, www.asolo.com

With more people using lighter packs in the backcountry, hiking boots have lost some of their grip in the marketplace as many hikers have switched to trail running shoes. But there are still a lot of rocky outposts where the protection and support of a hiking boot is preferable. Asolo's Fugitive is a good boot for those occasions. These light hiking boots feel comfortable right out of the box yet provide superb support and traction in challenging terrain with a moderately sized pack. The secure lacing system reduces heel lift and the Gore-Tex lining keeps feet dry during afternoon thundershowers. On loose scree and steep down slopes the added ankle protection and support is reassuring. Asolo's innovative Duo-Asoflex midsoles provide a nice mix of a shock-absorbing softer layer with a stiffer shank for torsion control. – PG



TEVA SAMPAGO

\$90, www.teva.com

A modern version of the classic leather fisherman's sandal, Teva's Sampago is a handsome, breezy, functional closed-toe sandal. Waterproof Nubuck leather, a padded interior, Velcro straps, aggressive Vibram soles and a shock pad in the heel mean this Euro-styled sandal can handle the rigors of the trail too. Post hike, an anti-bacterial treatment helps keep sour-foot odors from interrupting conversations at the office or the pub. – PG