

Holiday Gift Guide

Reviewed and tested by Ron Johnson

Great Gifts for Outdoor Sport Lovers

Sierra Designs Arrow Rock Sleeping Bag

Totally bagged.

A no-muss, no-fuss bag from Sierra Designs, perfect for the urban dweller requiring a reliable, quality sleeping bag for camping trips and backcountry adventures. You won't find all the bells and whistles, and no it isn't a good choice for your solo trek to the North Pole. But, especially for the money, the Arrow Rock, with 600-fill goose down, has all the quality features that you require, and a brand that counts for much in outdoor adventure. I like the glow-in-the-dark zipper pulls, snag-free zipper tracks, the breeze tube and the chest pocket. I don't like the oversized footbox, but a minor quibble. The women's version is fleece-lined — nice!



Suggested retail price: \$300

www.sierradesigns.com

Bottom Line: Quality and value assured with one of the best in the business.

Mountain Hardware Compressor Jacket

Hardware for the hardcore.

An active person's insulated jacket that is ideal for those intent on testing the limits during colder weather — think climbing, orienteering, fall and winter hiking, snowshoeing. This jacket is seriously light, weighing in at around 15 ounces, and its synthetic insulation, dubbed PrimaLoft, is as soft as down but dries a lot faster if you end up getting wet. I like that Mountain Hardware hides a great technical garment in a stylish package with the little things like a micro-chamois-lined chin and fleece-lined hand pockets. I don't like that I could use some better venting.



Suggested retail price: \$240

www.mountainhardware.com

Bottom Line: A primo jacket for cool weather action sports.



Suggested retail price: \$140

www.merrell.com

Merrell Full Pursuit Trail Running Shoes

Perfect for off-roading.

Merrell has a hard-core group of shoe lovers who dig the company's snug fitting Vibram outsole, and cool lacing system. From adventure racers, to joggers who simply love running in the dirt, the Full Pursuit offers serious stability, which is key in a good trail runner. Nice Air Cushion midsole and Vibram Full Speed sole, and anatomically molded footbed as well as plenty of breathable mesh in the upper and tongue. I like the solid, tight but not uncomfortable feel of the Full Pursuit shoes, and its surprising breathability. I don't like the average styling, and it gives up some flexibility in exchange for stability and protection. The good news is that it also comes in a Gore-tex version.

Bottom line: Great shoe for adventure racers who actually run off-road the majority of the time.

The North Face Gotham Jacket

Batman never had it so good.

A super-hot serious cold-weather jacket from The North Face, the Gotham rocks. It has style, a must, but also a surprising amount of function with plenty of breathability. In addition, the seams are sealed for moisture resistance, and it also employs The North Face's "electronic acceptance system," which means you can hit the terrain park at Blue Mountain listening to your favourite tunes on your iPod without giving up any maneuverability. This is key. I like the sheer warmth factor, and the detachable fur trim. I don't like the fur trim. 'Nuff said.



Suggested retail price: \$279

Bottom Line: A serious winter jacket for a serious lover of the season.

www.northface.com

Lebert Equalizer

Homegrown hard bodies.

One look at the Lebert Equalizer, and you might think you've found yourself one fancy-schmancy drying rack... a new product from IKEA perhaps. But in reality, Toronto-based personal trainer Marc Lebert has designed a simple, yet very effective strength training system that is both easy to use and easy to store — the two essentials for any home exercise aficionado. Basically, we have two workout bars, weighing in at about eight pounds each, and Marc has designed upwards of 50 exercises utilizing your own body's weight as resistance to work all the major muscle groups, especially the triceps, lower abs, chest and back muscles. Some exercises are obvious: dips, pull-ups, push-ups and the like, and some you have to get a bit creative. In the end, stick with the system and it seems you'll get some good results. I like the portability, ease of storage and the idea that you can help yourself along when need be, not to mention it was created right here in Toronto. I don't like that I could only dry socks and shirts on it, but my jeans wouldn't fit.



Suggested retail price: \$99

www.lebertequalizer.com

Bottom Line: Look no further for an inexpensive, easy exercise routine for this winter.

Columbia Sportswear Tabernash Peak Boots

Piqued about the peak.

Life in the big city means you don't have to climb glaciers to get to work in the morning, or sled across Artic tundra for your beloved Starbucks, but this is still Canada and that means a serious winter boot is a necessity; especially, those of us who don't stop lovin' the outdoors after the first snowfall. Columbia Sportswear to the rescue. The Tabernash Peak is ideal for the weekend warrior requiring a serious winter climbing boot for snowshoeing, snow hiking as well as shovelling the slush out of the driveway. That means waterproof, light and breathable. I like the nubuck leather upper, as well as the heel and toe cap and the Thinsulate insulation. I don't like the average outsole.



Suggested retail price: \$120

www.columbiasportswear.com

Bottom Line: Solid winter hiker with a definite urban sensibility.

adidas SuperNova ForMotion Long Tight

Super tights, cape not included.

adidas hit it big this summer with their line of SuperNova running apparel. The fall/winter cold-weather version of these three-stripe garments has been much anticipated as the sculpted fit, unbelievable function, and attractive look is exactly what Canadian runners are looking for.



Suggested retail price: \$100

www.adidas.com

Bottom Line: Enough style and function to get you out of bed and out running in the streets this winter.

Kelty Kids Adventurer Child Carrier Backpack

Have kid will travel.

For the active parent whose addiction to hiking cannot be quelled, there is the Adventurer by Kelty Kids. I find it gratifying to come across a product that seems to have everything figured out. The design of this pack is a perfect example. From pinch-free frame joints, and five-point safety harness system, to enough pockets to hold everything from bottles and cell phones, to diapers and change pads, the Adventurer, literally, leaves nothing to chance. And that is important for any parent looking to get out and tromp in the woods for an afternoon. I like that Kelty takes their kids carriers as seriously as they do their adult products; high-end construction materials, sun/rain hood, sternum straps, padded back panel. I don't like, well, I can't think of anything - this pack left absolutely nothing to chance.



Suggested retail price: \$235

www.kelty.com

Bottom line: Good for kids up to 50 pounds, so it will be with you for a long time. Built to last.

Give the gift of Get Out There this season!

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Get your weekly fix of the hottest news, events and products specifically for you! Sign-up online at www.getouttheremag.com

e-news

Over-the-top Gifts for Those Who Have Everything

Electra Bicycles

Sweet rides.

From the makers of the coolest rides on the planet, Electra Bikes, comes my fave: June. The ideal gift for that lady in your life, June is the culmination of a growing trend toward tricking out cruiser bikes to reflect a personal style and sensibility. Not only that, it features excellent craftsmanship as well as a Shimano Nexus hub which houses your gears, brake and other assorted doo-dads so you don't have to worry about mechanical failure due to over-exposure. I like the sweet style, and the long list of available accessories – literally, all the bells and whistles. I don't like that there isn't a pink version... oh wait, there is.



Suggested retail price: \$539

www.electrabikes.com

Bottom line: Include a lock, a big thick lock - this bike draws attention.

Oakley Thump MP3 Sunglasses

Put some Thump in your rump.

The Oakley Thumps are an indulgence, a toy, and a brilliant addition to any sports nuts gear locker. The equation is a simple one: take some of Oakley's finest polarized sunglasses, attach a wicked MP3 player and mix in an ergonomic headset. Billed as the world's first wearable electronics, the Thumps are something to behold: amazingly light, beautiful polarized lenses that flip up for night or indoor use of the MP3 player and some serious style. Now, if the MP3 player wasn't enough, Oakley has also launched the Razrwire, replaced the MP3 player with a cell phone. I like how easy the Thump is to control, and the effort it took to make it truly one size fits all, and the sheer style of the package is sweet. I don't like the earbuds, a little rough, and the prohibitive cost.



Suggested retail price: \$600 512MB Thump, \$345 Razrwire

www.oakley.ca

Bottom Line: A little pricey, but an absolutely incredible toy.

Rossignol Women's-Specific Skis

Rossi's for mom.

Rossignol is once again at the forefront of alpine skiing technology. This time, the innovations are to the benefit of female skiers. This ski season, the Zenith series, Z5w and Z1w will feature the Lambda concept specifically tailored to women. The Lambda concept has the plate solid in the front for more leverage and easier turn initiation, and ramped at the end for balance. Basically, instead of designing for the mushy middle, Rossignol is taking advantage of gender differences. The result is a skiing position that is more natural for women with greater power distribution. Rossignol has seven models for women. The Zenith series is their best all-terrain ski for the intermediate to expert level. The perfect gift for hard-to-buy-for Moms who still love chargin' the slopes.



Suggested retail price: \$899

www.rossignol.com

Bottom Line: Skis designed specifically for women, a no-brainer.

Quick Gifts for Fast Friends

Wigwam Merino Wool Hiking Socks

Suddenly giving socks is actually a good thing.

Wigwam has a huge variety of socks with tons of different materials, sport-specific applications, etc. My favourite? Hands down it has to be the merino wool line of hiking socks.



Suggested retail price: \$15 (Merino Wool Light Hiker)

www.wigwam.com

When you are out tromping in the woods on a frigid January weekend and you need that extra little bit of motivation, sliding on a pair of these beauties is just the thing. Extremely comfortable, good in all weather conditions and quite snug. Give the gift of happy feet!

Sierra Designs Alpaca Beanies

All about the beanie, baby!

This winter's essential fashion accessory is sure to be the beanie hat. Here we have a fine example in the Alpaca Beanie (100% baby alpaca yarn) from Sierra Designs. Alpaca is the lightest natural fiber on the market. This hat is ridiculously soft and warm, and apparently the more you wash it the softer it gets. It also comes in a whole whack of cool colours. Get them while they are hot!



Suggested retail price: \$45

www.sierradesigns.com