

THE WARMEST WINTER JACKETS →



Outside

BUYER'S GUIDE

WINTER 2008-2009

The Gear You Need

347

COOL NEW PRODUCTS

- Alpine Skis
- Snowboards
- Trail Runners
- Goggles
- Snowshoes
- Backcountry Setups
- Gloves



SPECIAL WOMEN'S SECTION
(TURN TO PAGE 117)



16 KILLER VALUES
Sweet Deals for Winter Fun & Adventure



EXPERT PICKS SKIS >> SNOWBOARDS >> STYLE



Forum John Jackson Pro \$550

HIGH FLYER

Like the Tahoe-based hucker for whom it's named, this one is all about the park. The Jackson Pro's true-twin shape and easy swing weight allow for solid spins and switch riding. "Superstiff and powerful, this thing tore through the park," remarked one tester after multiple laps. Strips of lightweight carbon stiffen the wood core's laminate, making this one of the year's twitchiest boards—though probably not one for beginners, who'll likely find it too reactive and the torsion too stiff. Smaller riders, or those who hike a lot, might also find it a bit heavy. 158; forumsnowboards.com



Palmer Timeless \$499

SAFE AT ANY SPEED

With its cap sidewall construction, the Timeless dishes up supersmooth, chatter-free turns at any speed. But it likes to rip, too. At higher velocity, Palmer's FLF technology (which earned the company a Gear of the Year award last year) slightly lifts the nose and tail, to prevent the nose from digging into the snow when turning. Just be careful in the park: The beech-and-poplar core is quite poppy and launched a few testers over the transition and onto knee-jarring flats. Also, the core and capped sidewalls result in a fairly stiff board, which makes buttering and pressing more difficult. 156, 160, 164; palmersnowboards.com



Flow Quantum \$419

A SOFTY WITH GUTS

This true twin spins like a top with incredible control, but thanks to its predictable flex and soft feel, it's an extremely forgiving board—and a great choice for intermediates looking to take it to the next level. It won't let you down: Testers were surprised by the Quantum's stability and lack of chatter when they hit the gas. Credit the four-way layered laminate (most boards only make it to three) and a wood core with a high strength-to-weight ratio for its confidence-inspiring feel on hard snow. For the money, you'll be hard-pressed to find a board that performs this well all over the mountain. 152, 156, 158; flow.com

K2 Ø \$700

FAST AND LIGHT

Hailed as the lightest snowboard on the market, this all-mountain model's superior float in the soft stuff made it a tester favorite. But lightness doesn't equal weakness. Thanks to a synthetic polymer placed beneath the binding inserts—K2 calls the stuff Harshmellow—this setback twin has guts, silencing chatter on hardpack and smoothing out even the cruddiest chop. It's probably a bit too dynamic for beginner and intermediate riders, but our more advanced rippers found it pleasingly quick edge to edge, with "good, even pop and an easy swing weight," according to one. 153, 156, 159, 162; k2snowboarding.com





Salomon Sick Stick \$600

FOR POWDER AND PARK
By replacing layers of fiberglass and resin with structural bamboo veneers, Salomon has figured out how to make a board that's a bit healthier for the planet—and, of course, extremely fun to ride, especially when heading into the side-country. The tapered tails help prevent nosedives in the deep stuff, while the twin-tip shape lets you spin off cornices without worrying which way you land. Note: Some riders found the Sick Stick a bit too soft overall, which might be the result of its sidewalls—they're made of (you guessed it) bamboo rods instead of standard-issue ABS plastic. 156, 160, 163; salomonsnowboards.com

KILLER VALUE
Nidecker Random \$349

STIFF AND STABLE
On paper, the 154 demo model we were sent should've been too short for most of our testers. But this true twin proved to be surprisingly stable at speed. "It felt longer and stronger than it should have at top speed," said one of our larger riders. The reason: Its bomber construction (a full-length poplar core beefed up with beech) makes for an incredibly stiff board with lots of pop. The only downside to all that stiffness was the extra work and weight it took to butter. Cool detail: Each handmade base is constructed with randomly placed pieces of recycled P-tex (get it?) that make each board unique. 149, 154, 158; nidecker.com



Burton Fix \$470

LAP THE PARK
The Fix's reinforced edges are designed specifically to stand up to wear and tear in the park, while its soft flex allows for easy spins and takeoffs. The Fix also features Burton's new Scoop Technology, which refers to the board's forgiving, spoonlike convex curve and tapered edges. Scoop allowed testers to push through sketchy landings that normally would've tossed them. The great snow feel? Credit Burton's proprietary ICS binding system, which practically eliminates the plastic between your sole and the deck. Caution: The Fix gets chattery when you hit the gas on firm snow. 149–162; burton.com

BINDINGS
INNOVATIVE DESIGN AWARD

Ride Contraband

With a unique V-strap system that uses only one ratchet at the heel, the Contraband is a cinch to tighten. And the toe strap may look like a big rubber band, but it's more secure than it appears. \$199; ridesnowboards.com

BEST THAT MONEY CAN BUY

Flow Team With shock-absorbing base pads, stainless-steel cables, and a time-tested all-mountain design, the Team remains one of the most durable and quickest-securing systems we've ever tested. A redesigned strap shifts materials to areas that need more support. Translation: superior response with cradling comfort. \$419; flow.com

KILLER VALUE

Rome United

By using different materials in different parts of the binding, EVA padding in the baseplate and gel-infused ankle straps, the United pulls off a nifty trick: It's soft enough to take the sting out of flat landings but stiff enough to feel solid on firm snow at high speeds. Plus the price is right. \$190; romesds.com