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ISPO trend report: Mountaineering Safety and comfort on the ground and on the mountain

Mountaineering is a sport of extremes: retro and modern, exercise and relaxation. This is what makes leisure time out in the fresh air so enjoyable. Whether you are an ambitious mountaineer or simply a fan of leisurely hikes, the equipment and safety functions for all these types of sport are getting better all the time. Mountaineering is now safer and more comfortable than ever before. ISPO will present the latest mountaineering products for professional and amateur mountaineers which received the ISPO AWARD in February.

This year, the manufacturers will offer climbers, mountaineers and hikers new products focusing on safety, lightweight design and comfort. The way in which consumers go mountaineering nowadays explains why these areas are setting the trends. Outdoor enthusiasts would like to experience sport and relaxation in nature—a “back to the roots experience”—after work or at the weekend between other leisure activities. Mountaineering is also the perfect outdoor fitness program. To ensure that sport and relaxation go hand in hand, it is important to have equipment that is comfortable, light, easy to handle and yet safe.

Safety comes first

Simply clambering about—that was yesterday. Mountaineering fans think about themselves and their safety. Manufacturers are realizing this and are developing clever yet easy-to-use safety systems. “REVO”, the first bidirectional supported securing system from Wild Country is just one example: the release mechanism eliminates the risk of accidents regardless of the rope’s direction of travel. Each uncontrolled descent activates the safety mechanism which grabs the rope and stops you falling.

Lightness and comfort

Lightweight products are very popular with consumers nowadays. Modern mountaineers like to pick up the pace as trail runners or speed hikers. Heavy kit or uncomfortable clothing will only slow you down. Clothing, rucksack and shoe manufacturers are therefore using lightweight materials which do not restrict running movements and are easy to store. For example, SALEWA has created a rucksack specially for alpine speed disciplines. Not only is it lightweight, it also features load stabilizers for the 18 liter storage space and is designed to adapt flexibly to the user's body. Low weight was a key factor when choosing the "PRODUCT OF THE YEAR" in the Outdoor segment at the ISPO AWARD 2017 too. As a year-round, multipurpose mountaineering boot, the RIBELLE TECH OD from SCARPA combines lightness and durability and is very much in tune with the times. Materials offering a complete range of properties—from breathability and waterproofing to comfort—are therefore needed in mountaineering and outdoor sport.

The trend continues: material combinations everywhere

It is hardly surprising that a combination of materials is still very much in demand. Depending on the functional requirements, items of clothing can be manufactured using appropriate materials—for maximum warmth or adequate freedom of movement. Not only synthetic materials are available on the market. More and more often, manufacturers are combining synthetic fibers with natural materials and are placing particular emphasis on sustainable, environmentally friendly production. Although the trend is no longer new, it is continuing and is becoming increasingly important as a sales argument. Outdoor fashion must be compatible with consumers' social conscience. Customers are keen to know where wool for example comes from, are checking that environmental standards such as bluesign® and the Responsible Standard Down (RDS) are met and are looking for products with a small CO₂ footprint.

Haglöfs is one manufacturer that is taking all this into account. In its trekking boot, it combines the bluesign®-certified Schoeller Kepron upper material with Kevlar and Gore-Tex. Blackyak too offers combinations of materials: the new hybrid outer layers consist of the synthetic insulating material Polartec Alpha as well as down and PrimaLoft. And Devold of Norway uses merino wool to regulate body temperature and mixes the natural product with spacer material in its "Tinden Spacer Jacket" hybrid mid layer.

Optimum breathability for all activities

The various filling and outer materials combine the properties which sportsmen and women need in different situations. For example, breathability is very important for highly active mountaineers. Because they sweat more, they can become chilled or overheat without proper ventilation. New technologies which keep consumers warm even if they sweat are appearing all the time. VENTRIX technology from The North Face is one such system—it features lasered ventilation holes. If the person wearing a garment is standing still, the holes remain closed and trap the warmth. If the person is moving, they open dynamically, providing ventilation and regulating torso temperature. Flexible items of clothing like these are taking into account a further trend: sports clothing has become everyday clothing and can adapt to temperatures even on a leisurely walk through a city.

Further information can be found at www.ispo.com/award

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