



## Glacier Mountaineering Boots

For the following courses:

Fall Rockies to Ecuador Leadership Semester

Alaska Mountaineering

Rockies to Alaska Summer Semester



*Photo by Vic Kerr*

This document is designed to help you decide which boot is right for you on your course. Glaciated mountains require a properly fit boot built to give you the support and performance you need to carry a heavy pack on snow, loose rock, glacial terrain, soggy jungle meadows, and hot, dusty trails. A good boot and a mediocre boot can mean the difference between focusing on the scenery or focusing on your feet. A bad boot could even stop you from completing the course.

On Page 2, you will find a list of acceptable boot types and models. Please **ONLY** bring boots from this list. If you'd like to discuss a boot model not on the list, please contact your course advisor at 720.381.6589

If you need help with any part of the boot-buying process, please call your course advisor at: 720.381.6589

Expect to spend between \$350 - \$550 retail for new boots. Boots over \$600 are likely too much for your course, and boots under \$350 are likely too light or poorly made for your course.

Please be sure to try your boots on, and break them in. A boot that doesn't fit your foot or is not broken in will be very uncomfortable, even if it is the best boot money can buy.



## List of Appropriate Boots

Please only purchase a boot from this list – all of these are appropriate for your Outward Bound course. If you'd like to discuss other boot models, please contact your course advisor.

Men's Boots*		Women's Boots*	
Brand	Model	Brand	Model
Asolo	6B+ GV	Asolo	6B+ GV
	Alta Via GV		Alta Via GV
Garmont	Icon Plus GTX		
	Mountain Guide Pro GTX		
La Sportiva	Nepal Evo** or Nepal Cube	La Sportiva	Nepal Evo** or Nepal Cube
Lowa	Weisshorn GTX	Lowa	Weisshorn GTX
Salewa	Vultur Vertical GTX		
Scarpa	Mont Blanc GTX or Mont Blanc Pro GTX	Scarpa	Mont Blanc GTX or Mont Blanc Pro GTX
		For advice on purchasing women's mountaineering boots, check out this online video and article: <a href="http://www.outdoorgearlab.com/Mountaineering-Boot-Womens-Reviews/Buying-Advice">http://www.outdoorgearlab.com/Mountaineering-Boot-Womens-Reviews/Buying-Advice</a>	

\*Regardless of your gender, you may find that your foot fits better in boots marketed for either men or women. Don't be afraid to try unisex boots, as well as both men's and women's models.

\*\*Year after year, the **La Sportiva Nepal Evo boot** is the perfect boot for these courses. However, if that particular boot doesn't fit your foot well, don't force it. Try one of the other excellent boots on this list.

### WHY THESE BOOTS?

The boots on the list are from established, reputable brands, and they meet the criteria describe more thoroughly in the next pages of this document. They are appropriate for the terrain you will be traveling in. Your boots need to be warm (insulated), water resistant and crampon compatible for step-in crampons (COBS will supply the crampons). Water resistant boots generally have either a water-proof, breathable membrane incorporated into the boot or is constructed of full leather so you can waterproof them with a product. You will need to waterproof your boots regardless if they have a breathable membrane or not.



**Consider the following boot characteristics while shopping:**

## BOOT DESIGN

### Boot Height

High cut boots provide good balance and ankle support for off-trail terrain and heavier loads. They are the most appropriate design for our course area. Mid- and low cut boots do not provide much ankle support, tend not to be built for heavy loads or snow walking, and are not appropriate for our courses.

### Material

- Full Grain Leather: Boots such as the La Sportiva Glacier are made with thick leather called full grain leather. This is the traditional material for backpacking and mountaineering boots.
  - Pros: Long lasting, durable, when cared for correctly, very water proof.
  - Cons: Heavy, requires a long break in period, doesn't let sweat vapor escape as well.
- Synthetic: These boots are made of lightweight, synthetic materials. Most of the modern technical mountaineering boots are made of a combination of leather and synthetic materials to reduce weight.
  - Pros: Lighter, more comfortable off the shelf, easier on the feet, easier to hike on-trail with
  - Cons: Less durable, waterproof GTX liner wears out within a couple of years.

## WATERPROOF / BREATHABLE LINERS

Waterproof/breathable linings, such as GORE-TEX, are generally denoted by a GTX in the model name. When new, they are great for keeping feet dry in consistently wet conditions (as we often encounter on course), and highly recommended for early season snowy courses. Boots with mesh that allow water or air to move directly to the feet are not appropriate for course. As noted above, these linings typically become less waterproof over the course of a couple years of use.

## SOLE AND TREAD

It is important to have a very stiff sole to kick steps into hard snow and provide stability with crampons on. Soles must have a heavy, lug tread that will improve traction in muddy or snowy surfaces. Vibram-brand soles are very reliable and of high quality. To test stiffness, try to bend your boot in half. If the boot folds at the laces it is too flexible (see photo below).



**The boot in the photo above is too flexible to be appropriate for your Outward Bound course.**



The following boot types and models are **TOO LIGHT AND NOT APPROPRIATE** for your COBS course:



*The La Sportiva Trango boot, above, is a great boot but is inappropriate for your course due to its lack of insulation.*

**Boot Models NOT Appropriate for Course:**

- La Sportiva – any of the Trango series
- Scarpa - Charmoz
- Asolo - Aconcagua
- Lowa - Cevedale Pro
- Salewa - Condor
- Types
- Anything marketed as a “hiking boot”
- Uninsulated mountaineering boots
- Anything marketed as a “snow” boot, like Sorel brand (not stiff enough).



The following boot types and example models are **TOO HEAVY AND NOT APPROPRIATE** for your COBS course:



*The Asolo AFS Evoluzione, above, is a terrific boot, but it is too heavy, stiff and warm for your course. It's also more expensive than you need.*

#### **Boot Models NOT Appropriate for Course:**

- La Sportiva Batura 2.0 GTX
- Scarpa Phantom Guide
- Asolo AFS Evoluzione
- Lowa Latok XT
- Types
- Double Boots (a boot with a leather or plastic shell and removable insulating liner)
- Boots with built in gaiters (while not necessarily overkill for your course, many boot models with built in gaiters are more than you need).



## BOOT FITTING

- When boot shopping, bring any special insoles or orthotics you regularly use. Also bring the socks you plan to wear. It is a good idea to get your foot measured for its true size by a salesperson and to try on three pairs of boots before deciding. You can also bring your course Itinerary Overview document to help a sales person understand your needs.
- To start, fully lace the boots and walk around the store to get a feel for the boot fit. If you can load a backpack with weights while you do this, even better. If your store has an incline ramp, walk up and down it.
- While walking, keep in mind:
  - Toes: You should have some room to wiggle your toes at the front of your boot. It is okay to have your toes slightly touch the front of the boot, but they should not be pressed against the front of the boot.
  - Heels: Your heel may slip a little in the back of the boot, especially while walking uphill, but more than ¼" is too much. If your heel slips at all, try retying the boot tightly around the ankle or switching insoles.
  - Pressure Points: There should be no obvious pressure points. If something feels slightly uncomfortable in the store, it will probably be VERY uncomfortable in the mountains.
- Your boots will feel stiffer than your usual footwear, but should still feel comfortable. If you are worried about your boots fitting correctly, ask the salesperson if you can wear them around the house for a few hours and bring them back if there is a problem.
- If you need to choose between a boot that is slightly too tight, and one that's slightly too loose, opt for the looser.
- Different brands and models have slightly different shapes. One brand (and the "men's" and "women's" models of each brand) may fit your foot better than another. This is another reason to try on many different types and brands of boots.

## BREAKING IN YOUR BOOTS AND FEET

Once you have your new boots, it is important to break them in. If you have synthetic boots or used leather boots it is not as important to break the boots in, but it is still very important to break your feet into the boots. You need to develop callouses and foot fitness that will keep your feet happy on course. Wear them around town, to school and at home, for at least two weeks before course. Hike or walk at least 20 miles in your boots prior to course.

## WATERPROOFING YOUR BOOTS

It is important to waterproof your boots beforehand as well—there will be limited chances to waterproof boots on course. Use whatever is appropriate for your boot type, according to the manufacturer. Rub in sealer on all leather surfaces and stitching. Let boots dry naturally. Never heat your boots in ovens or near fires and heaters.