

HAPPY FEET

INTRODUCTION:

- Most important purchase. Can make or break an outing
- #1 piece of safety equipment. Most critical relative to your comfort on an outing
- Typically \$200 - \$350 retail. Wholesale can be ½ price, but fit should be primary concern

ATTRIBUTES:

- Outer sole: Vibram, proprietary. Tread.
- Mid sole:
 - Shank: Metal, Plastic, Wood; ½, ¾, full
- Inner sole: Foot bed – manufacturer's or after market (Superfeet)
- Welt: Modern (molded), Norwegian (stitched)
 - Might be step in crampon compatible (not required)
- Upper: Leather: Full grain (shiny), Nubuck (suede)
 - Composite uppers (leather/fabric) are not acceptable for this course
 - Minimize seams (leakage paths)
 - Fully gusseted tongue (minimizes leakage over the top of the boot)
- Lining: Cloth (shorter break in), Leather (longer break in, more durable)
 - Storm sock: Goretex, Sympatex, proprietary. Can improve waterproofing

TYPES OF BOOTS:

- Plastic mountaineering expedition boots
 - Look like ski boots.
 - Wrong boot for this course
- Full shank leather mountaineering boots
 - No bend in sole, step-in crampon compatible
 - Wrong boot for this course although usable if broken in
- ¾ shank leather mountaineering boots
 - Minimally bendable sole. Step in crampon compatible.
 - Good boot for this course. Also usable for basic mountaineering (after course)
- ¾ shank leather backpacking boots -
 - Minimally bendable sole. No provisions for crampons
 - Correct boot for this course. Can be used for basic mountaineering
- ½ shank leather backpacking / hiking boots
 - Moderately bendable sole. Lighter weight
 - Minimally acceptable boot for this course. Review with an instructor
- Leather / cloth composite hiking boots
 - Moderate to easily bendable sole. Light weight.
 - Unacceptable for this course

INSERTS:

Support, improve fit, prevent problems (plantar fasciitis, under- or over- pronation, heel slippage, etc.)

OEM (original equipment from the manufacturer) (included)

Superfeet (~\$60)

Custom (\$200-350)

Stand on insert outside the boot to check size (~thumb width in front of big toe), then put in boot to check for comfort. REMOVE them after hiking to dry!

SIZING:

- Go to an expert, where there's a selection, and when you have time
- Try on boots in the evening when feet are swollen from the days use
- Pick your socks first. Try on boots with the socks and inserts you'll be wearing in the field
- Start ½ to 1 full size larger than shoe. European sizes give greater granularity
- Length, width, volume
- With laces loose and foot forward, two stacked finger should fit behind heel
- With boots laced securely there should be no or minimal heel slippage while walking
- Snug but not tight, wiggle toes
- Stomping and scuffing the boots on a down hill should not cause toes to hit front
 - If so, try next ½ size larger
- Wear boots around store for at least an hour, up and down stairs, squat, use incline board, toe kick
 - Look for fit, abrasions, pinching, sloppiness – any sign of discomfort
 - Any discomfort will be magnified 100 times in the field
- Try aftermarket insoles such as Superfeet

BREAK-IN:

- Modern boots are made to be worn right out of the box
 - Forget any old wives tales you've been told. Do not wet/soak the boots
 - Most still require some "break-in".
- Wear to work and play for several days
- Start hiking. Increase the length of hikes before a big outing

WATERPROOFING: Goretex is not enough!

- What is Goretex?
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendation. Ask the person selling the boots
- Water-based aqueous (Nikwax) is the standard
- Spray on sealants (Tectron) are very good at sealing the leather
- Some people swear by bees wax products such as Sno Seal – not my favorite
- Waterproof out of the box and before hiking (while they're still clean). Remove laces. Boots need to be clean and damp. Follow the directions on the product.
- If boots have been used, clean before waterproofing (nylon brush, damp cloth)
- Water proof multiple times out of the box, then again after each harsh use

SOCKS:

- Buy two pairs of high quality socks (~\$20/pair). Same place you get the boots
- Crew height
- NO COTTON. Wool is OK, but modern synthetics or blends such as Smartwool, Darn Tough, and Thorlo brands are superior. REI brand is fine.
- Different weights. Thicker is probably better—cushioning, insulation, absorb sweat
- Modern synthetics do not require liner socks.
 - Many people wear them anyway to minimize blisters and to help with wicking sweat away from the foot
- Liner socks are very thin nylon or polypropylene or wool
- Wigwam, Injinji, REI...or none