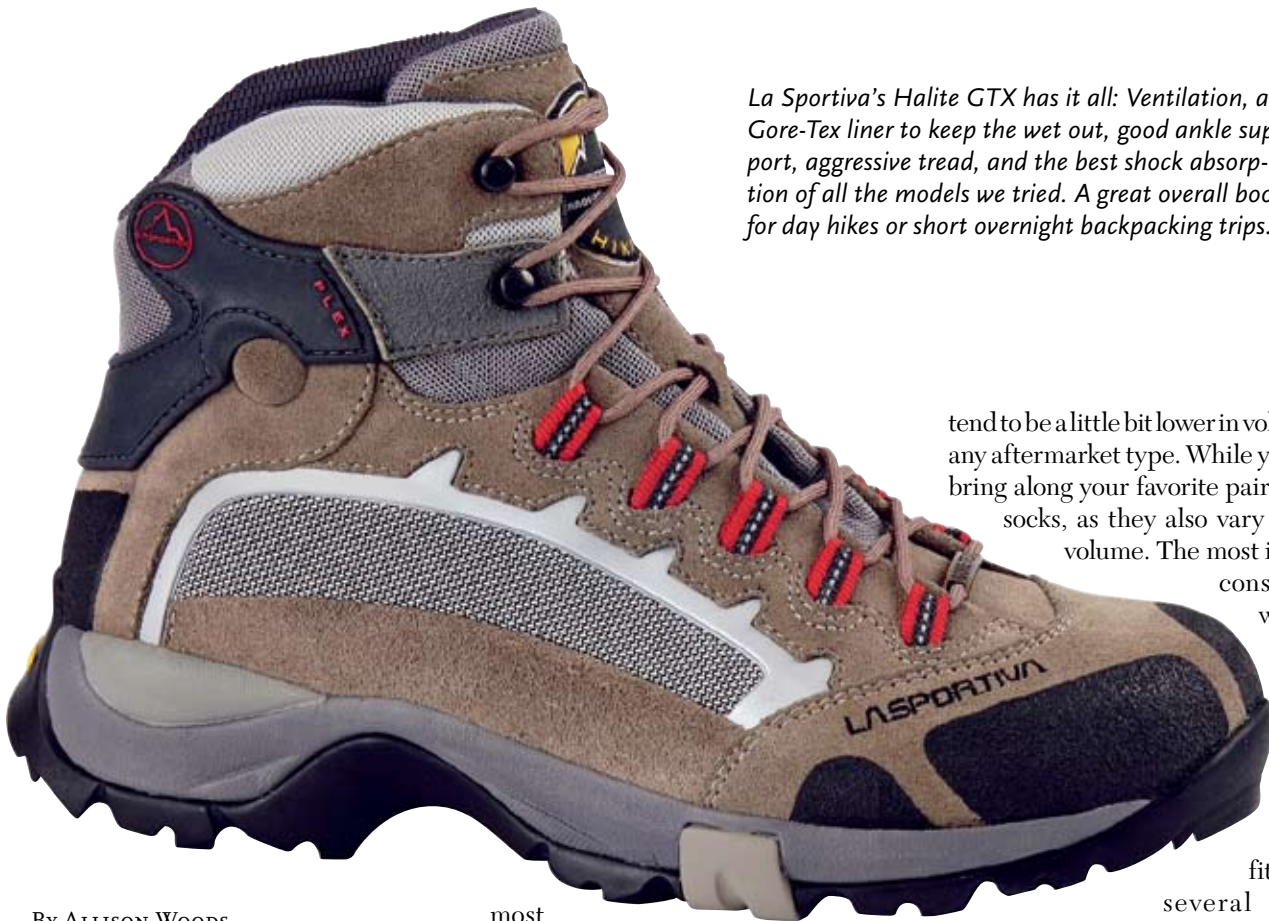


Boots for a Day or a Night

Midweight boots designed for day hikes and brief overnights



La Sportiva's Halite GTX has it all: Ventilation, a Gore-Tex liner to keep the wet out, good ankle support, aggressive tread, and the best shock absorption of all the models we tried. A great overall boot for day hikes or short overnight backpacking trips.

tend to be a little bit lower in volume than any aftermarket type. While you're at it, bring along your favorite pair of hiking socks, as they also vary widely in volume. The most important consideration when purchasing a new pair of boots is getting a proper fit. Try on several pairs of boots, and seek the experience and advice of a local retailer.

BY ALLISON WOODS

This month, we look at a breed of boots designed to fit the same niche as last month's midweight packs (*Washington Trails*, May 2007)—something rugged enough for the most difficult of day trips and short backpacking trips,



but lightweight and comfortable enough to please the finickiest among us. At their best, lightweight boots embody both the comfort of their lighter siblings and the sturdiness and reliability of their burlier backpacking counterparts. There's a certain sensibility about gear like this, and I for one am happy to see this category continue to expand. I find it to be the

most versatile class of equipment, since it works well for the vast majority of the hiking we do. If you want a really good pair of day hikers that will see occasional overnight use, take a look at these three excellent footwear options.

In case you're not familiar with how we test boots here the WTA Test labs, the factory insoles are always removed and replaced either with custom orthotic insoles in my case, or off-the-shelf insoles (like Superfeet or Shock Doctor) in the case of the other testers. In order to maximize comfort and performance, I can't stress enough how much improvement in performance can be had from your hiking boots with this one simple modification. Bring a pair of insoles with you when trying on new boots so that you get the fit right, as the standard insoles

La Sportiva Halite GTX

\$150

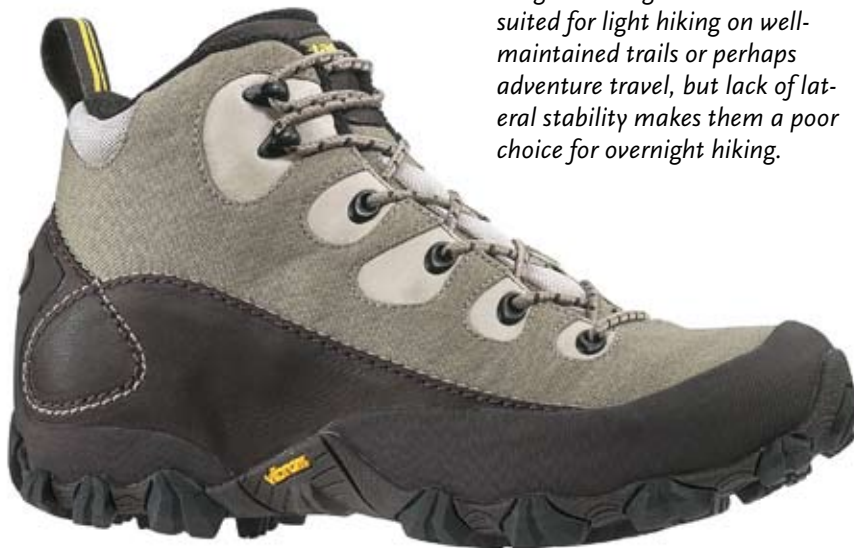
We've included La Sportivas in many footwear reviews over the years and are rarely anything less than totally impressed with their boots. This year's Halite GTX did not disappoint. These lightweight versions of their sturdier counterparts feature a split-leather upper with a bit of ventilation to keep feet cool. A Gore-Tex liner protects feet from errant stream water, and a standard lacing system keeps boots snug. Special care was taken in the design of the rear of the uppers. The

coverage of the ankle is good and high, with a deep cut in the rear to free the Achilles tendon from rubbing. The aggressive tread provides for stability on loose surfaces and wet rock, and the thoughtful tongue design helps keep feet dry. The shock absorption was the best of all three boots. The Halites are definitely tough enough for light overnight backpacking or moderate scrambling.

Patagonia Vagabond

\$140

The Vagabond is part of Patagonia's new footwear line for 2007. The uppers are mostly canvas with leather in the high-wear areas. The styling is unusual, but it looks better on the foot than expected.



Patagonia's Vagabond is best suited for light hiking on well-maintained trails or perhaps adventure travel, but lack of lateral stability makes them a poor choice for overnight hiking.



The Zamberlan 151 Java XCR makes up in performance what it lacks in style. The boot provides good ankle support despite its low profile, and Gore-Tex to keep feet dry. A good choice for lightweight overnight trips.

Tread design is less aggressive than the other boots we tested, and as such, perhaps better suited to "backpacking" Kao San Road in downtown Bangkok than on remote Cascade trails. But when sturdy footwear is called for, and

if there's some hiking to be done, these boots will step right up to the task. On rough terrain, the Vagabond was unimpressive in terms of lateral stability, and they ran slightly wide. I appreciate Patagonia's use of recycled materials in many components of the boots. The boots claim to be waterproof, but we were unable to test this aspect of the boots. The Vagabond is a solid performer on the lighter end of the three boots we tried, and will work well for trail hiking on well-maintained trails.

Zamberlan 151 Java XCR

\$145

The Zamberlans looked kind of wimpy right out of the box, so I hoped for little and was rewarded with plenty. These boots are a bit lower than a traditional hiking boot, something between a low top and a high top (low-mid?) and the lack of ankle support seemed troubling. That is, until I tried them out. These little babies perform so much like a full-on high top boot that you'll be fooled into thinking they are. The Java XCR is a fully leather boot, with a Gore-Tex liner

GEAR WE'VE TRIED

to keep feet dry. An aggressive tread design couples with excellent lateral support and improbable ankle support to make a surprisingly effective hiking boot. Zamberlan doesn't stop there, either. These boots look good enough to wear

around town, and have a lacing system that goes almost down to the toes to allow for a very precise fit. The lug soles are slightly sticky and provide excellent traction on wet surfaces and in mud. Sizing runs a bit small, so be sure to buy

from a reputable retailer and have your boots fit by a knowledgeable salesperson. I would not hesitate to recommend these boots for a lightweight overnighiter. A very impressive boot. ♦

NEAT STUFF! Fine Backcountry Dinnerware

GSI X2 One Person Table Set

\$11

Spokane company GSI has been making water bottles and dishes for years, but this little dish set recently caught my eye. A blue-tinted Lexan resin coffee cup (also available in orange) is joined by a matching square dish. Lexan spoon, fork and knife on a handy ring accompany this set which is attractive, durable, and functional.



Form and function: The blue-tinted Lexan meal set from GSI is stylish, durable and practical.

Light My Fire Meal

Kit

\$20

Light My Fire's Meal Kit provides more than dishes, it's an entire design concept rolled into a tidy little package. Crack open the outer shell, which becomes a plate and a bowl, and you'll find an innovative spork and a cup/bowl with lid

and lanyard. Under the lidded cup hides a combination cutting board and colander, and inside the cup there's a smaller cup with a tight waterproof lid.

The clever design of the spork (also sold separately, \$3) will either please you or not, largely depending on how you view sporks in general. I found it to be oddly shaped and too small for my hand, but some may love its quirky design.

If this all sounds a little too Madison Avenue for you, go with my tried-and-true eating system, which consists of an old Cool Whip container, a titanium coffee cup, and a big ol' PermaWare spoon. It's not fancy, but I'm fairly sure food tastes every bit as good, albeit less stylishly presented.

—Allison Woods ♦



Cups, colanders, dishes and a funky spork (\$3 extra) are found in Light My Fire's bright yellow backpacking dining set.