

A silhouette of an ice pick is positioned vertically on the left side of the page, with its head pointing upwards. The word "GUIDE" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font across the upper part of the pick's shaft. The word "PICK" is written in a similar font across the lower part of the shaft, with a small "TM" trademark symbol to its right.

GUIDE PICK™

2024

*Guide Pick
Results*



WHITTAKER MOUNTAINEERING

-  p. 2 | **How Guide Pick Works**
-  p. 3 | **Introduction**
-  p. 4 – 8 | **Backpacks**
-  p. 9 – 13 | **Sleep Systems**
-  p. 14 – 18 | **Harness & Ice Axes**
-  p. 19 – 23 | **Crampons & Poles**
-  p. 24 – 29 | **Headware**
-  p. 30 – 32 | **Duffles**
-  p. 33 – 37 | **Gloves**
-  p. 38 – 45 | **Upper Body**
-  p. 46 – 50 | **Lower Body**
-  p. 51– 58 | **Footware**
-  p. 59 | **Closing Thoughts**



How Guide Pick™ Works



Step 1

The guides over at RMI collectively spend over 10,000+ days a year on the world's highest mountains, climbing hundreds of thousands of vertical feet. They put their gear and apparel through the wringer. This stuff is their work wear and they simply will not tolerate inferior gear. In some cases, their lives depend on the mountaineering gear and apparel they use.



Step 2

At the end of the climbing season, guides are given a survey to find out what gear they are using and why it is their favorite. We don't often get complete agreement but we do get alignment and by looking at the data, a few clear winners rise to the top in each category.



Step 3

We take those winners, and stamp them with the Guide Pick™ logo on our site. We also compile this wonderful little document, which you can use to see top contenders, gear advice, Guide Quotes, and more. If you see a product you like, feel free to click the image to check it out on our site!

Note: RMI Expeditions guides are given guide uniforms, which they supplement with their own gear and apparel, and may have third-party endorsements from other brands.

We Simplify Outfitting

You'd never think it, but it is possible to have too much of a good thing...

especially when that thing is outdoor gear and apparel and you have to carry it all on your back for 2-3 weeks. We know that sounds crazy, but hear us out.

Whittaker Mountaineering was started almost three decades ago to help solve the problem of "too much choice" in the outdoor retail industry. The guests over at our sister company RMI Expeditions would get a list of gear and apparel they needed for their climb, and that was it. Then began the hours of learning, searching, reviewing, reading, shopping, and deal-hunting, all to find out that the parka you just spent \$400 on isn't actually going to keep you warm on Denali or Acongacua.

We decided to solve this problem, which is why our motto is "We Simplify Outfitting." We decipher the industry jargon, sponsored listicles, and 20-minute reviews, and cut to the chase. We want to distill the world of outdoors, and specifically mountaineering, gear, and apparel, creating cohesion and understanding of the Outdoor industry's overly technical explanations. And we've developed a tool that helps do exactly that: Guide Pick.

| P.S. if you want more info on any of the products featured in this guide, just click the image! You'll be taken to the product page on our site.



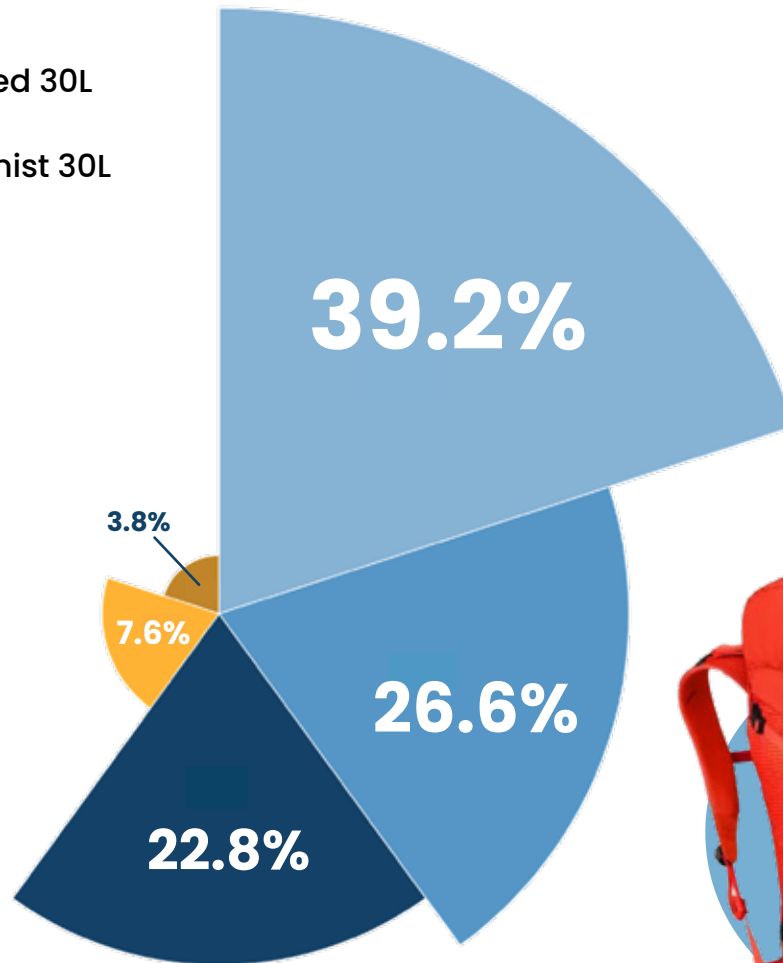
Backpacks | Day Use

30-45L

- Black Diamond Speed 30L
- Osprey Mutant 38L
- Patagonia Ascensionist 30L
- Arc'teryx Alpha 40L
- Hyperlite Prism 40L



Black Diamond Speed 30L



Design Principles

In almost all the gear featured in this guide, minimalism is key. While some features (like attachment loops, waist straps, and ice axe holders) are important, many are just “bells and whistles.” We also recommend staying away from mesh pockets on the exterior of packs they can get caught and pull you off balance. Plus, they’re just not super durable.



Osprey Mutant 38L



Arc'teryx Alpha 40L

3 Things to Look for in Day Use Backpacks:

- Space for layers, hard goods, food, water, & emergency supplies.
- Minimal feature set – don't get bogged down with upgrades.
- Waist straps: not as important on a day pack, but still beneficial.

Backpacks | Summit Packs

More Volume 65-75L

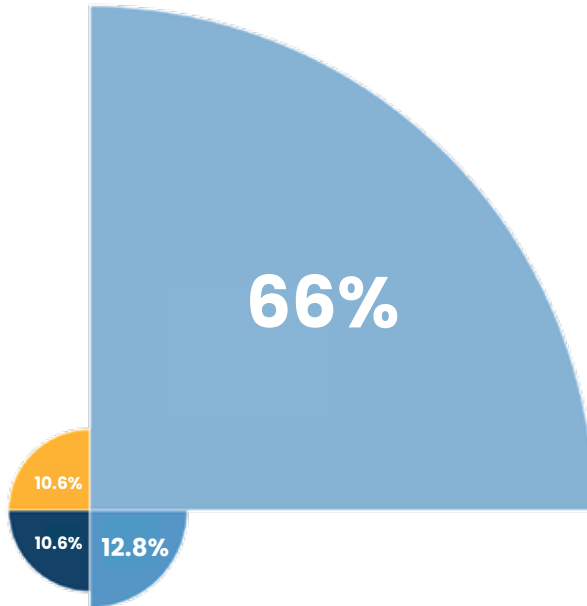
- Black Diamond Mission 75L
- Gregory Denali 75L
- Women's Osprey Ariel Pro 65L
- Mountain Hardware AMG 75L

Less Volume 50-55L

- Black Diamond Speed 50L
- Patagonia Ascensionist 55L
- Arc'teryx Alpha AR 55L
- Black Diamond Mission 55L



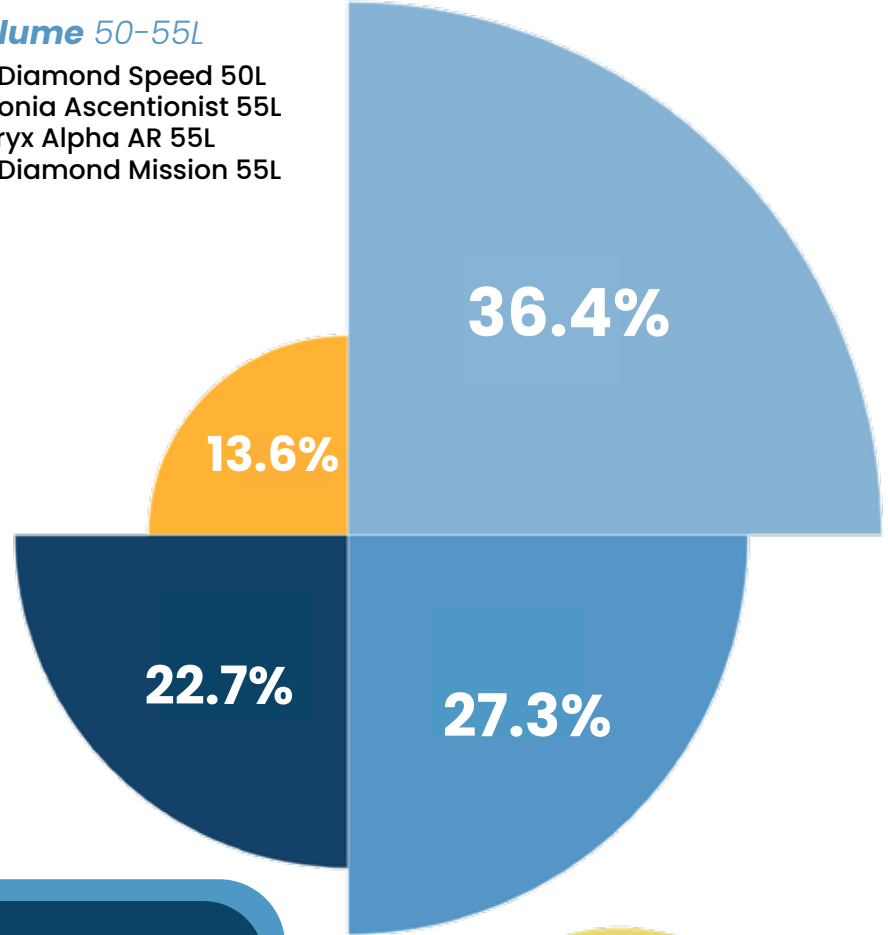
Black Diamond Mission 75L



Gregory Denali 75L

Design Principles

We asked guides about both 50-55L and 65-70L packs because everyone is different. If you're an experienced mountaineer with a highly developed sense for packing, a 50-55L is ideal for a 1-2 night summit climb. If you're more of an intermediate or novice or care about your creature comforts, don't try to stuff and scrimp to fit a smaller pack - you'll be much happier with a 65-70L. Either way, look for a single compartment, lightweight frame, and solid suspension system that can carry 50 lbs.



Black Diamond Speed 50L

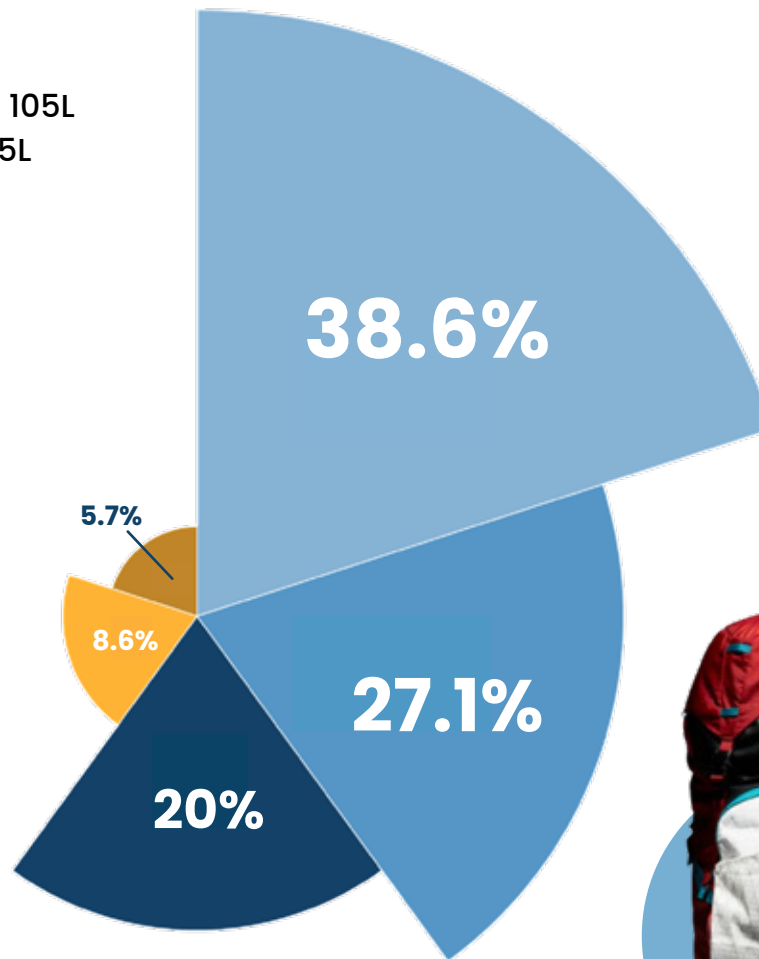
Backpacks | Expedition Packs

75 - 105L

- Gregory Denali 100L
- Mountain Hardware AMG 105L
- Black Diamond Mission 75L
- Osprey Mutant 90L
- Hyperlite Prism 85L



Gregory Denali 100L



Design Principles

Expedition packs are beasts, and rightfully so. You'll need to fit almost everything you need to live in a harsh environment for 2-3 weeks (and still be able to lift the thing) so a lightweight aluminum frame, frame sheet, or aluminum stays to help distribute the weight of your monster load. Again, we recommend a limited feature set to save weight, but there are a few nice-to-haves like a removable brain to bring into your tent.



Mountain Hardware AMG 105L



Black Diamond Mission 75L

- 3 Things to Look for in Expedition Packs:**
- Solid suspension system (should carry 70 lbs comfortably)
 - Single compartment (avoid separate segmented space)
 - Should weigh less than 6-7 pounds check weights



Day Use Backpacks

Black Diamond Speed 30L Pack

"The Black Diamond Speed 30 is simply the most function for the best price. The backpack carries tools and crampons externally extremely well, and is simple to use."

- **James Bealer**
25+ Rainier Summits



Summit Backpacks

Black Diamond Mission 75L Pack

"The BD Mission 75 has been my workhorse pack for Rainier since they put it in production. It fits everything for a 4 day climb, every feature has a function (minimal bells and whistles), and is a comfortable carry."

- **Peter Whittaker**
256 Rainier Summits



Expedition Packs

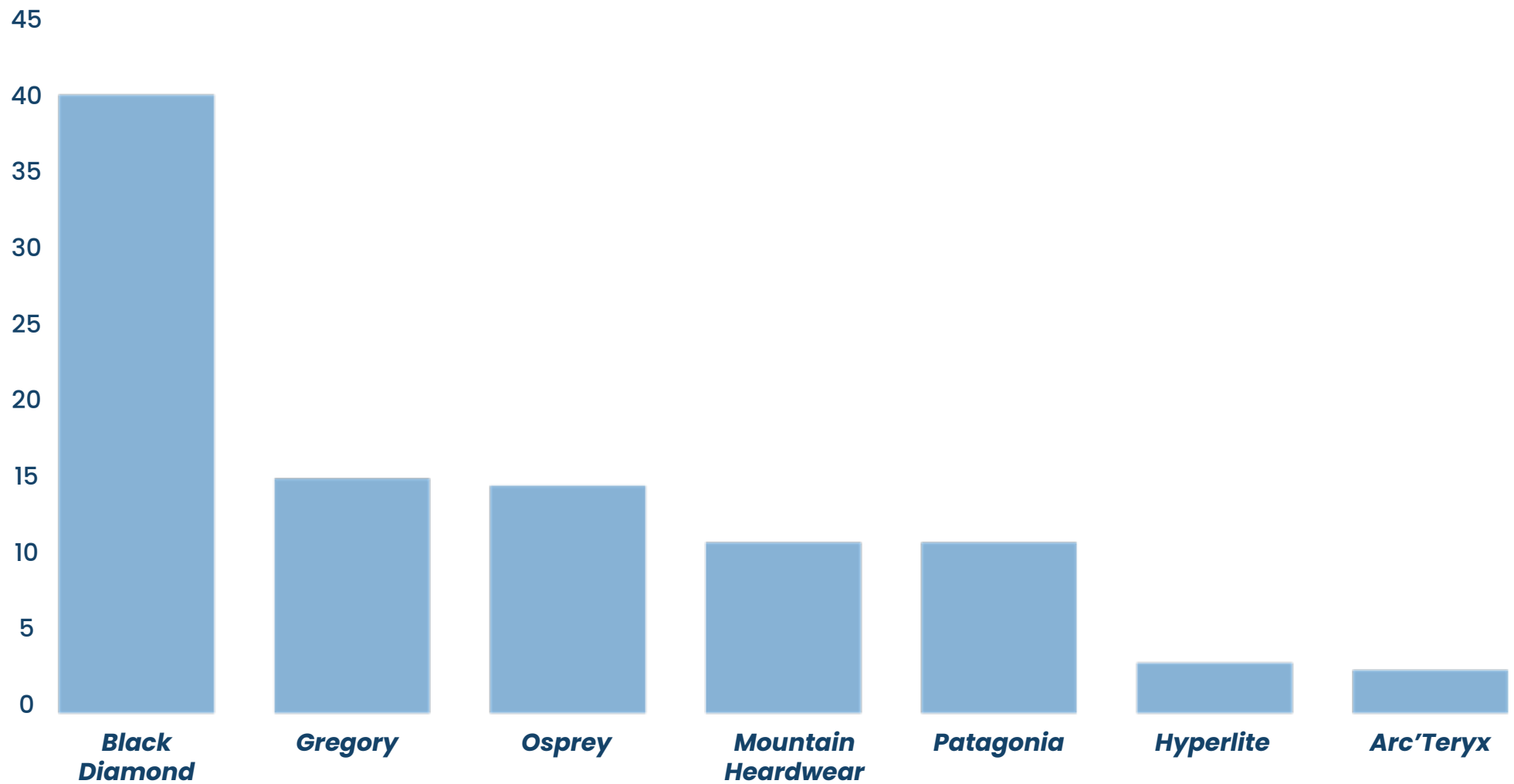
Gregory Denali 100

"The Denali 100 has been my go to pack for expedition climbing. The Denali pack has enough room to pack everything I need for a long trip without the added weight of too many extras. Gregory has designed a pack that allows me to comfortably carry heavy weights while using durable materials that stand up to abuse."

- **Mike Haugen**
14 Denali Expeditions



Top **Backpack** Brands



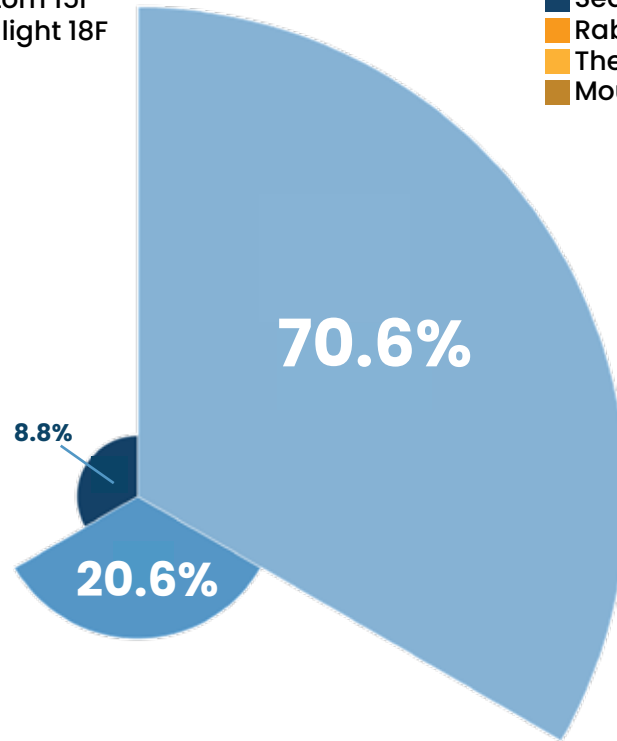
Sleep Systems | Sleeping Bags

Cold Sleeper Bag 0F | -20F

- Mountain Hardwear Lamina 15F
- Mountain Hardwear Phantom 15F
- Sea to Summit Spark Ultralight 18F



Mountain Hardwear Lamina 15F



Warm Sleeper Bag -20F | 35F

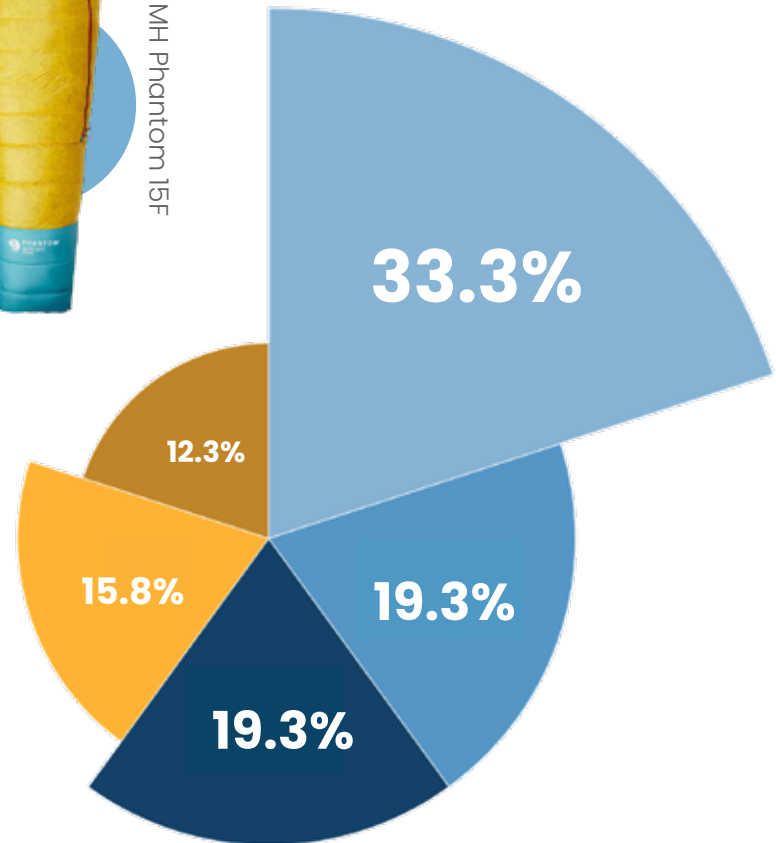
- Mountain Hardwear Lamina 30F
- Sea to Summit Spark Ultralight 28F
- Rab Mythic 200 Down 35F
- Therm-a-rest Vesper 20F Quilt
- Mountain Hardwear Phantom 30F



Sea to Summit Spark Ultralight 28F



MH Phantom 15F



Design Principles

Some people run warm, others run cold, so we asked Guides to look at bags rated from 0-15F and 15-30F. Either way, you'll have a choice between down and synthetic - Synthetic is better in wet conditions, but not nearly as lightweight and packable as down. Also, consider a longer bag to store inner boots and other things you don't want to freeze (batteries, water bottles, etc.) at the bottom of your bag.

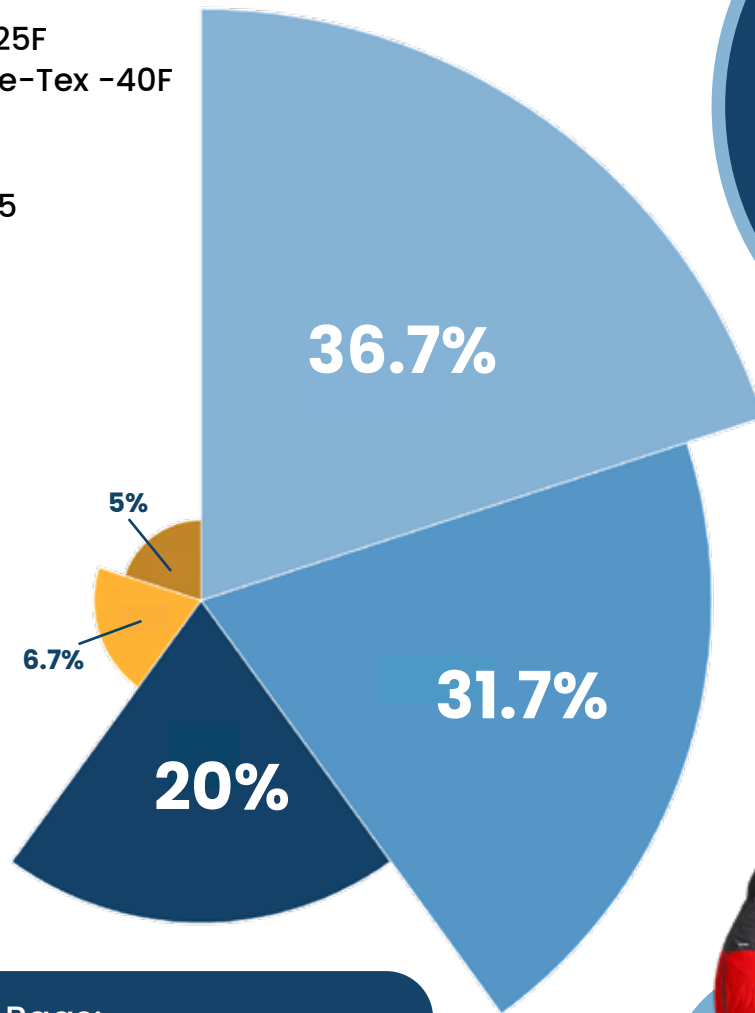
Sleep Systems | Expedition Bags

-20F | -40F

- Feathered Friends Ptarmigan Ex -25F
- Mountain Hardwear Phantom Gore-Tex -40F
- Marmot Col -20F
- The North Face Inferno -20F
- Feathered Friends Peregrine ES -25



MH Phantom Gore-Tex -40F



The North Face Inferno -20F



Marmot Col -20F

Design Principles

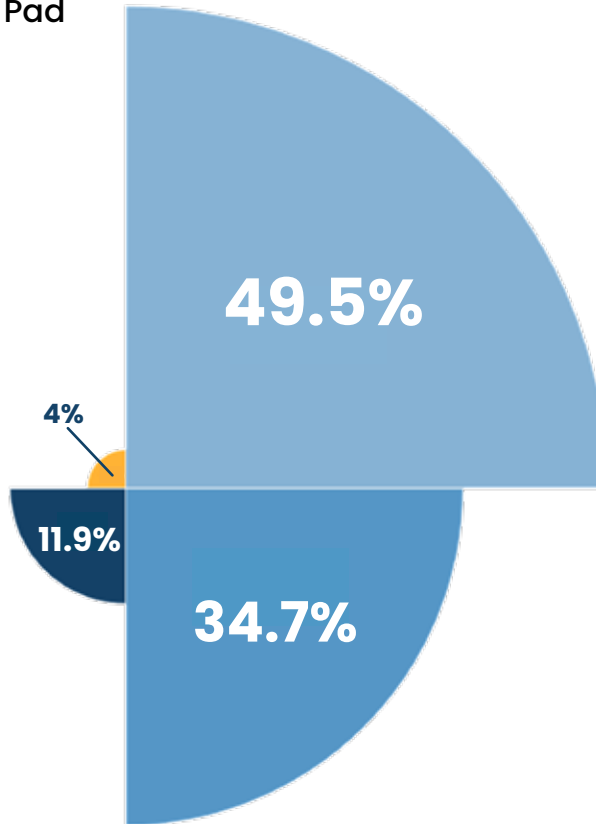
To sleep well on Denali or Everest, you'll need a bag that's rated to at least -20F. Down is better than synthetic on expeditions like these, given the better warmth-to-weight ratio and packability. A two-sided zipper is also a great option, so you can zip up to your chin from within the bag, and again, a longer bag allows room for storing items to keep them from freezing.

3 Things to Look for in Expedition Bags:

- A bag is rated to at least -20F or higher if you tend to run/sleep cold
- A Draft Tube that runs along the main zipper and keeps cold air out
- A hood & drawstrings prevent heat from escaping around your head

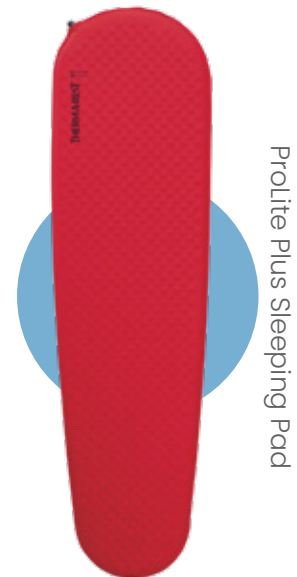
Sleep Systems | Sleeping Pads

- Therm-a-rest NeoAir XLite NXT Sleeping Pad
- Therm-a-rest NeoAir XTherm NXT Sleeping Pad
- Therm-a-rest Z-Rest Combined w/ Inflatable Pad
- Therm-a-rest ProLite Plus Sleeping Pad



Design Principles

Inflatable pads have advanced considerably over the years, but the Guides over at RMI still recommend an inflatable and foam combo if you're sleeping on snow. The high R-value of hardcell pads means they'll keep you toasty, while the comfort and light weight of inflatable pads make them worth carrying as well.



3 Things to Look for in Sleeping Pads:

- Inflatable pads can puncture easily: have a repair kit handy
- The higher the R-value, the better it'll insulate you from the ground
- Don't get up-sold by features like inflation sacks, same-brand bag/pad compatibility, or self-inflation claims

RMI Guides Top Picks



General Bags

Sea to Summit Spark

"I have been blown away by the Sea to Summit Spark. This brand has really stepped it up making a well thought out, extremely packable sleeping bag."

- **Joey Manship**

Multiple Rainier Summits



Expedition Bags

Marmot Col -20

"The Marmot Col -20 has been on all my Denali and Aconcagua climbs due to its smaller stuffed profile that limits the space it takes up in my pack."

- **Michael King**

49 International Expeditions



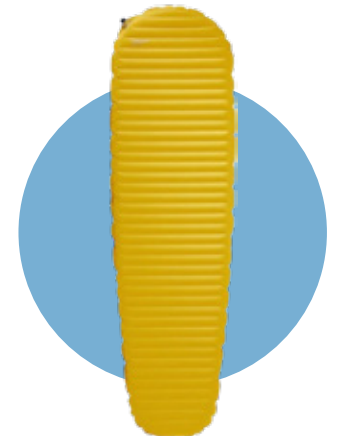
Sleeping Pads

Thermarest Neo Air XLite

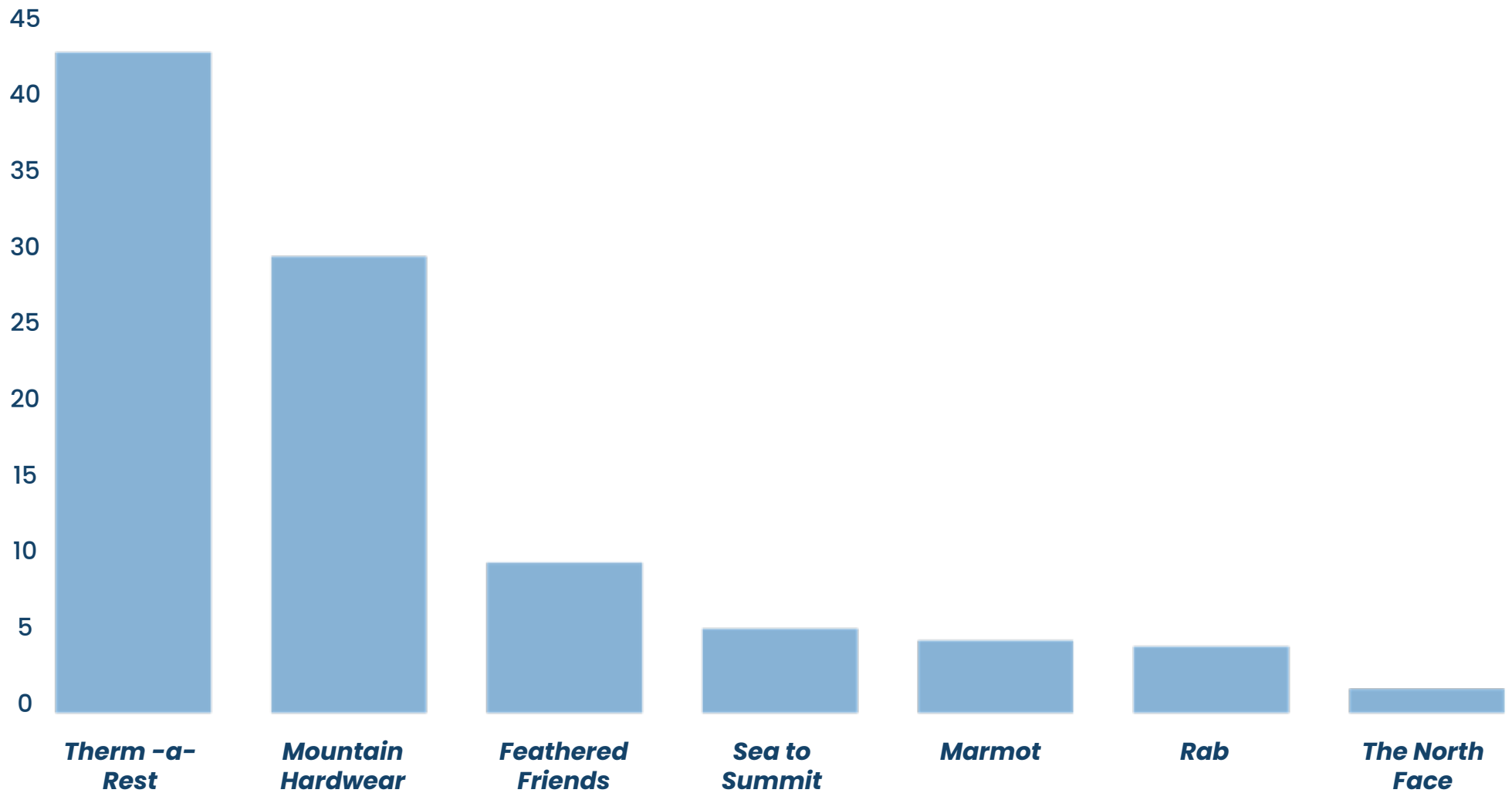
"If you're just going to have one sleeping pad, the Thermarest XLite is the one you want. Warm enough for winter use, Light and small enough to use through the summer."

- **Leif Bergstrom**

30+ Rainier Summits



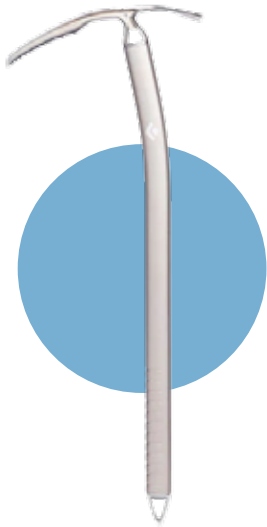
Top **Sleeping Bag** Brands



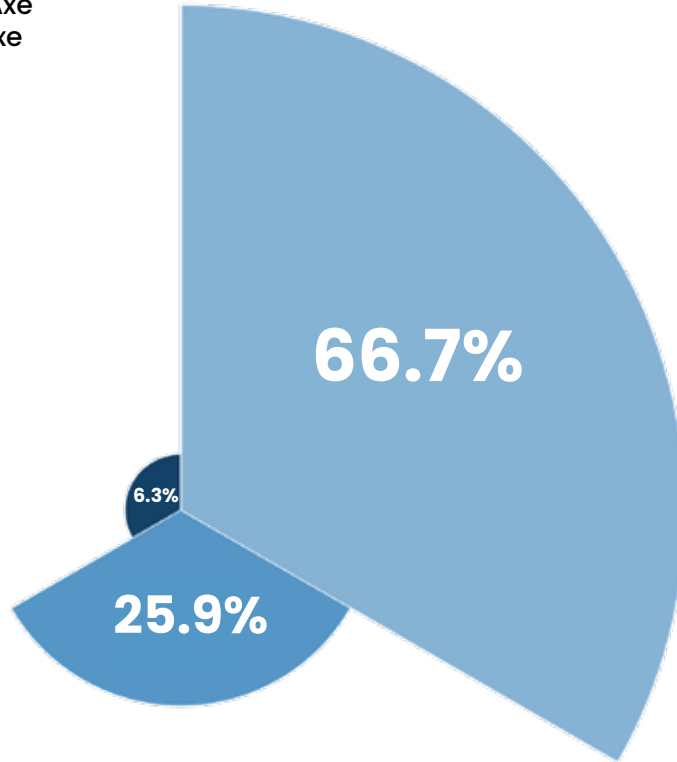
Harnesses & Ice Axes | Ice Axes

Intermediate Picks

- Black Diamond Raven Pro Ice Axe
- Petzl Summit Ice Axe
- Petzl Glacier Ice Axe



Black Diamond Raven Pro Ice Axe

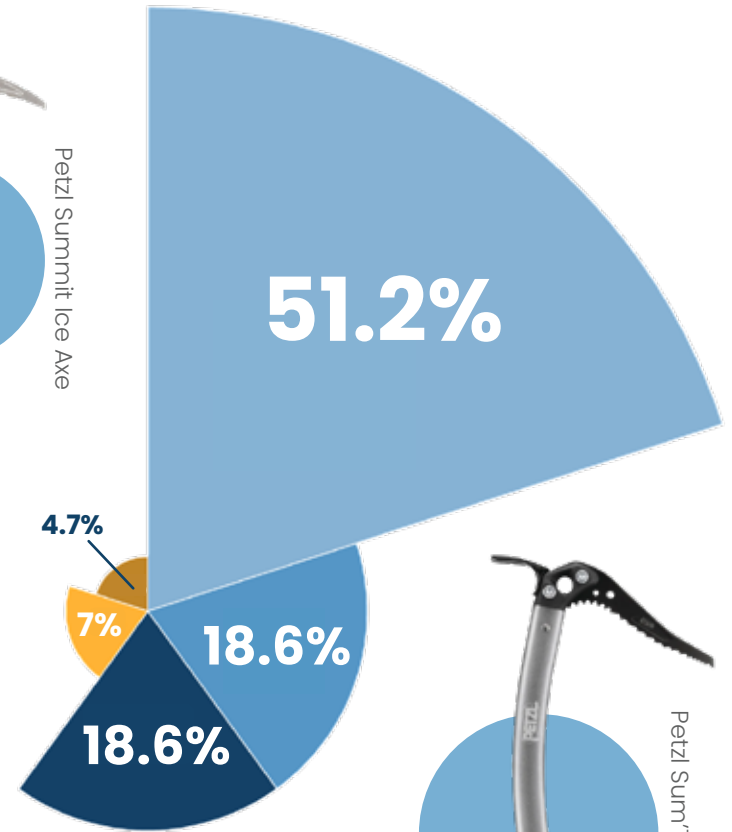


Expert Pick

- Petzl Sum'Tec Ice Axe
- Black Diamond Venom
- Black Diamond Raven Pro Ice Axe
- Petzl Summit Ice Axe
- Petzl Gully



Petzl Summit Ice Axe



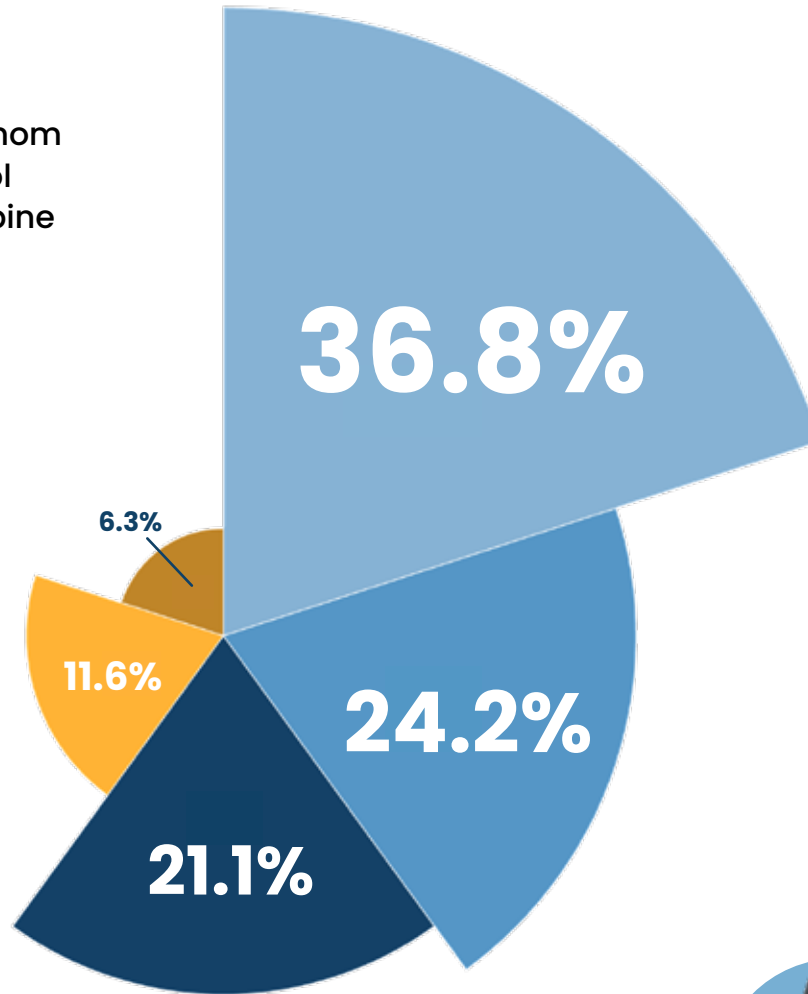
Petzl Sum'Tec Ice Axe

Design Principles

If you're doing a "general mountaineering" climb like the Disappointment Cleaver Route on Mount Rainier, your ice axe will be utilized more like a trekking pole than anything else. While it (and you) should still be capable of an ice axe arrest, most of the time you'll have it in the "cane" position. Size, shaft (straight or curved), and weight should all be assessed with this in mind. Our go-to is a straight shaft, aluminum body, and steel head, and somewhere in the 60-75cm range.

Harnesses & Ice Axes | Climbing Tools

- Petzl Sum'Tec
- Petzl Quark
- Black Diamond Venom
- Petzl Nomic Ice Tool
- CAMP X-Dream Alpine

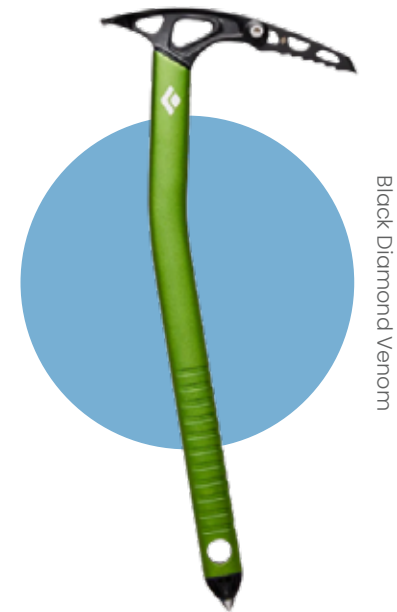


Design Principles

Prioritize an aggressive pick shape for secure placements and consider modularity for adaptability across the ice and mixed routes. Opt for a tool with an ergonomic grip and a shaft that's T-rated for strength and durability, ensuring it fits well with your hand size and gloves. Weight and balance are crucial for efficient swings and reduced climber fatigue, so seek a well-balanced tool that enhances swing dynamics and feels like an extension of your arm.

2 Things to Look for in Ice Tools:

- An aggressive (curved) pick allows for secure placement in steep ice
- Ice tool shafts are classified as Type 1 (B-rated) or Type 2 (T-rated), with T-rated shafts being stronger and more durable

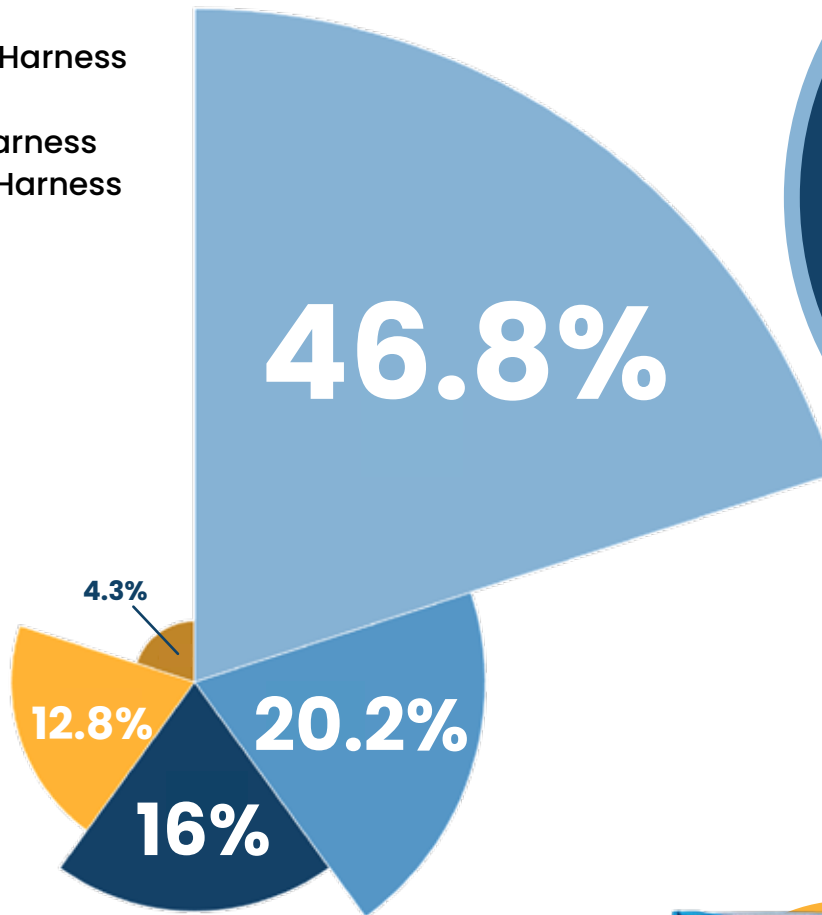


Harnesses & Ice Axes | Harnesses

- Petzl Altitude Harness
- Black Diamond Couloir Harness
- Petzl Tour Harness
- Blue Ice Choucas Pro Harness
- Blue Ice Choucas Light Harness



Petzl Altitude Harness



Design Principles

Unless you're technical rock or ice climbing, you'll likely spend much more time walking in your mountaineering harness than hanging in it. This means you can get away with less padding on your leg and waist loops. Adjustable risers allow for different types of activity as well, i.e. a higher tie-in point for better compatibility with a backpack's waist strap. Be sure to look for an internationally recognized certification from an organization like the UIAA or CE is important.



Black Diamond Couloir Harness

3 Things to Look for in Harnesses:

- Buckles that are big enough to thread with midweight gloves on
- At least one gear loop & ice clipper slots for securing ice screws
- Nylon or Polyester webbing is preferred, these are lightweight, super-strong materials that resist fraying



Petzl Tour Harness

RMI Guides Top Picks

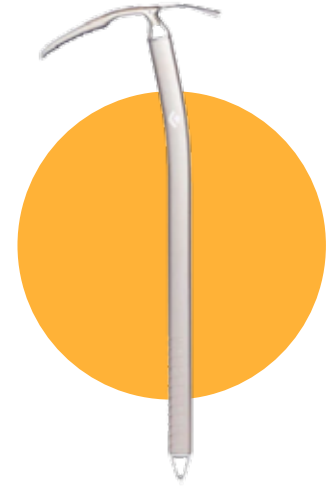


Ice Axes

Black Diamond Raven Pro

"Raven pro is great for the climbers first climb. Affordable and functional."

- **Hannah Smith**
54 Rainier Summits

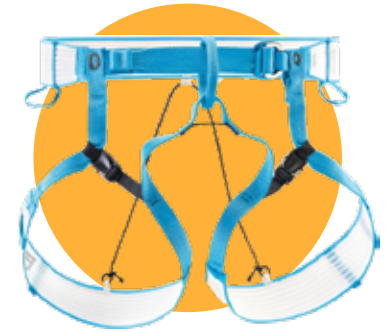


Harnesses

Petzl Altitude

"I love the Petzl Altitude harness. It is super light weight and very comfortable especially on long expeditions such as Denali."

- **Emma Lyddan**
8+ Technical Summits in Peru & Chile



Climbing Tools

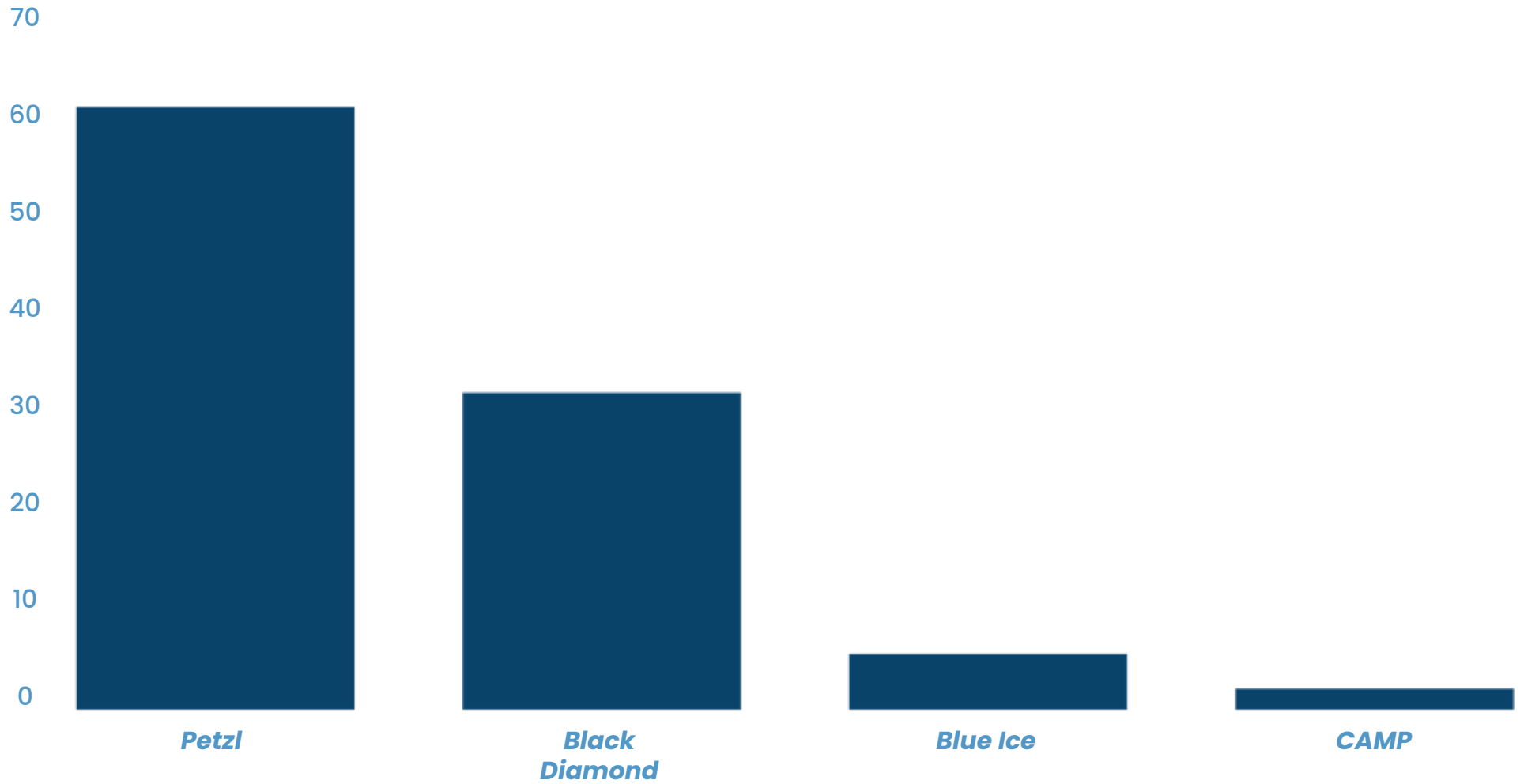
Petzl Quark

"The quark is a nice balance of enough aggressive curve to work well in moderate alpine ice while still functioning well as a piolet-style tool for easier glacier climbing, especially the latest model with the moveable pinky rest."

- **Henry Coppolillo**
15+ Rainier Summits



Top **Ice Axe & Harness** Brands



Crampons | 10 Point

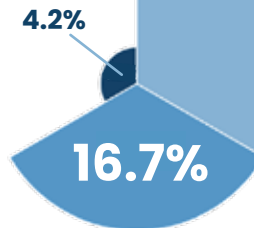
- Black Diamond Contact Strap Crampons
- Petzl Irvis Crampons
- Grivel G10 New-Classic EVO Crampons



Black Diamond Contact Strap Crampons



Petzl Irvis Crampons



3 Things to Look for in Crampons:

- Hybrid straps & plastic bindings fit the widest variety of boots
- Step-in (automatic) bindings work but must be fitted to your boots
- Go with steel - aluminum is just not as durable

Design Principles

10 or 12-point crampons will work well for general mountaineering. If you have a large foot, you may have to upgrade to a "long bar" to make sure your crampons can fit your boot (these are usually sold separately).



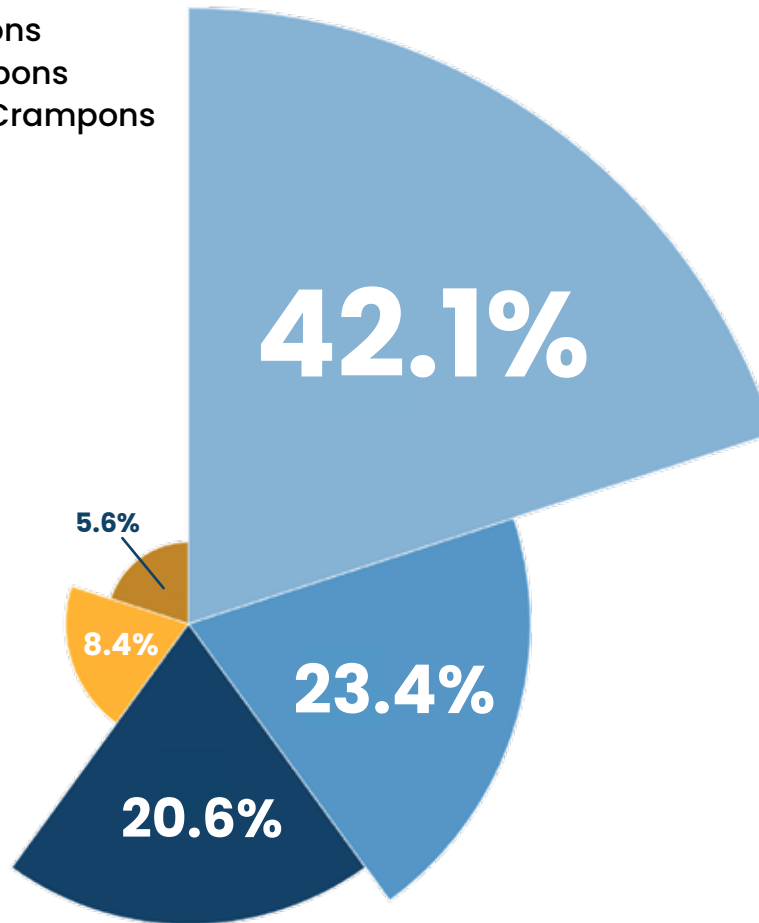
Grivel G10 New-Classic EVO Crampons

Crampons | 12 Point

- Petzl Sarken Crampons
- Petzl Vasak Flexlock Crampons
- Black Diamond Serac Crampons
- Black Diamond Sabretooth Crampons
- Grivel G12 Crampons



Petzl Sarken Crampons



Design Principles

When purchasing 12-point crampons, ensure they're compatible with your boots, opting for a binding system that fits securely to avoid slippage. Material choice is crucial; select steel for durability and better grip on mixed terrain or aluminum for lighter alpine treks. Consider the front points' configuration, choosing between dual-point for stability or mono-point for precision on ice, and prioritize adjustability in length and points for versatility across different climbing conditions. Features like anti-balling plates are essential to prevent snow build-up, enhancing safety and performance.

3 Things to Look for in Crampons:

- Choose a crampon with a binding system compatible with your boots
- Steel crampons offer durability & superior grip on ice and mixed terrain
- Dual front points = stability and versatility in mixed terrain, mono-points = precise placements on steep ice



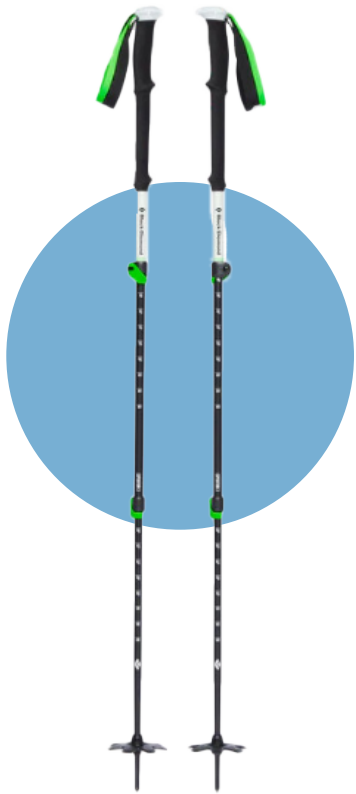
Petzl Vasak Flexlock Crampons



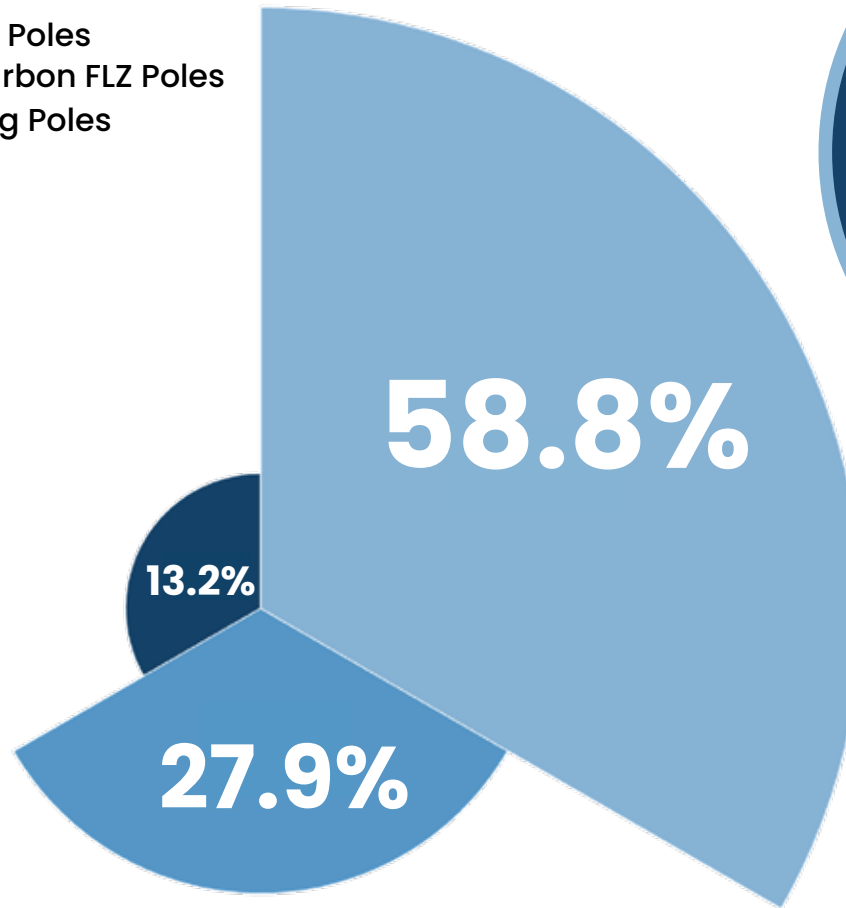
Black Diamond Sabretooth Crampons

Poles | Trekking Poles

- Black Diamond Expedition 3 Poles
- Black Diamond Distance Carbon FLZ Poles
- Black Diamond Trail Trekking Poles

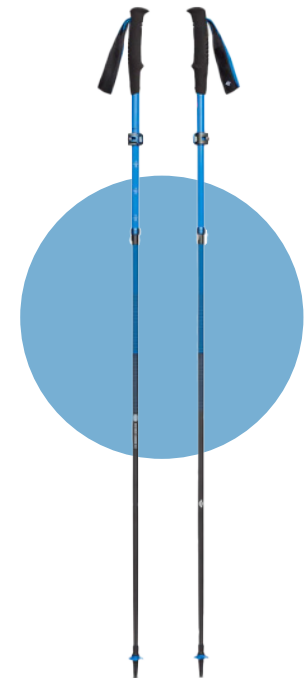


Black Diamond Expedition 3 Poles

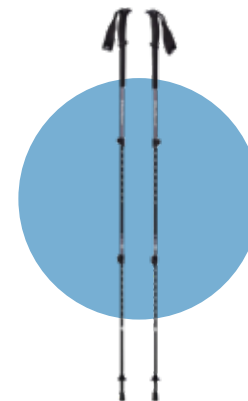


Design Principles

Trekking poles might seem simple... and they are. As long as you're ticking our "3 Things to Look For" boxes, you probably can't go wrong. While some options are significantly lighter than others, you'll just have to decide if that trade-off of weight for price is worth it.



Black Diamond Distance Carbon FLZ Poles



Black Diamond Trail Trekking Poles

3 Things to Look for in Backpacks:

- Adjustability is key for matching your height and lengthening poles
- 3-piece adjustable poles break down shorter for international travel
- Trekking baskets are fine, but be sure to have larger baskets as well for deep, soft snow

RMI Guides Top Picks



10 Point Crampons

Black Diamond Contact Strap

"My go-to crampon is the Black Diamond Contact. For 90% of general mountaineering it is the best option for security, traction, and success."

- **Sam Hoffman**
20+ Rainier Summits



12 Point Crampons

Petzl Sarken

"The Petzl Sarkens are the ideal crampons for when the Kautz is in full ice conditions. The vertically oriented front points sink easily into hard alpine ice but provide the necessary stability in softer conditions."

- **George Hedreen**
10+ Summits in the Tetons

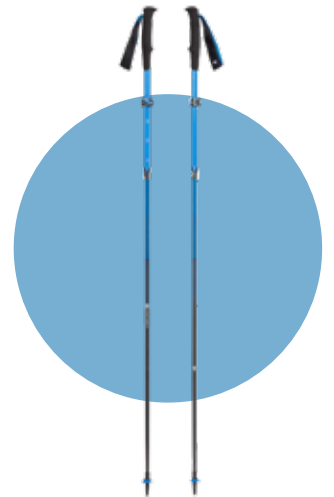


Trekking Poles

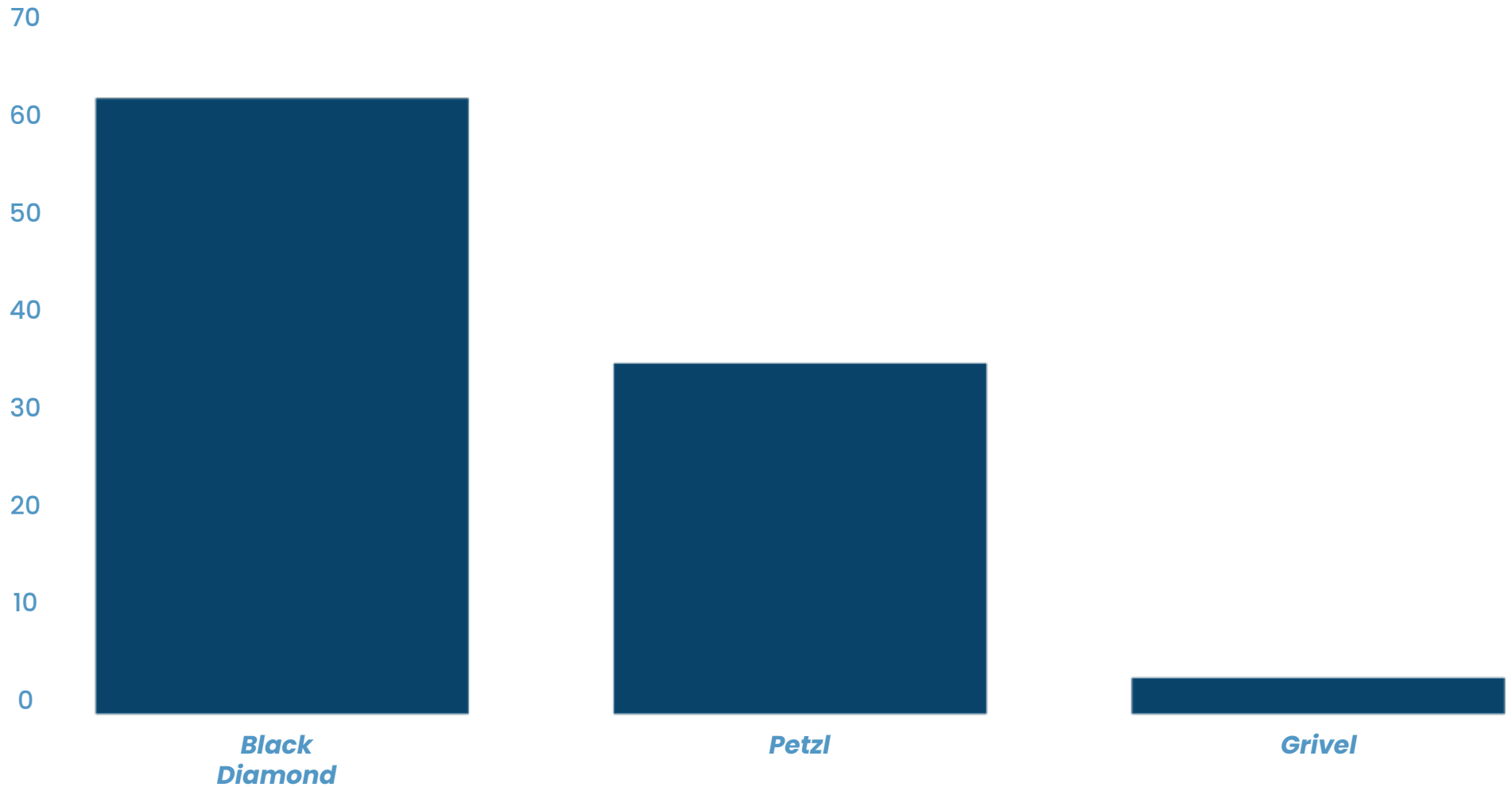
Black Diamond Z-Poles

"I love the collapsible system on these poles when I'm transitioning from trail to glacier or just trying to fit them in a checked bag. Light, reliable, and functional; these are the poles to beat for me."

- **Dominic Cifelli**
50+ Rainier Summits



Top **Crampon & Trekking Pole** Brands



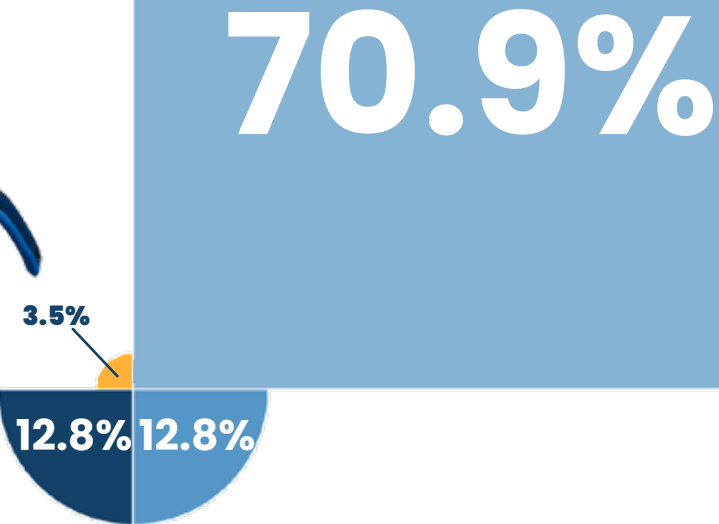
Headware | Glacier Glasses

- Julbo Shield Glacier Glasses
- Julbo Camino Glacier Glasses
- Julbo Explorer 2.0 Glacier Glasses
- Julbo MonteRosa 2 Glacier Glasses

Design Principles

Anyone who has spent time on snow will know that the reflection coming off the snow is almost as blinding as the sun itself. For that reason, most regular sunglasses won't cut it. Glacier Glasses are designed to protect your eyes from all sides, as well as block 100% of UV light in bright conditions. Self-adjusting lenses will automatically brighten or darken depending on conditions, but if that's out of your price range, just go for the darkest lens possible.

Julbo Shield Glacier Glasses



Julbo Camino Glacier Glasses



Julbo Explorer 2.0 Glacier Glasses



3 Things to Look for in Glacier Glasses:

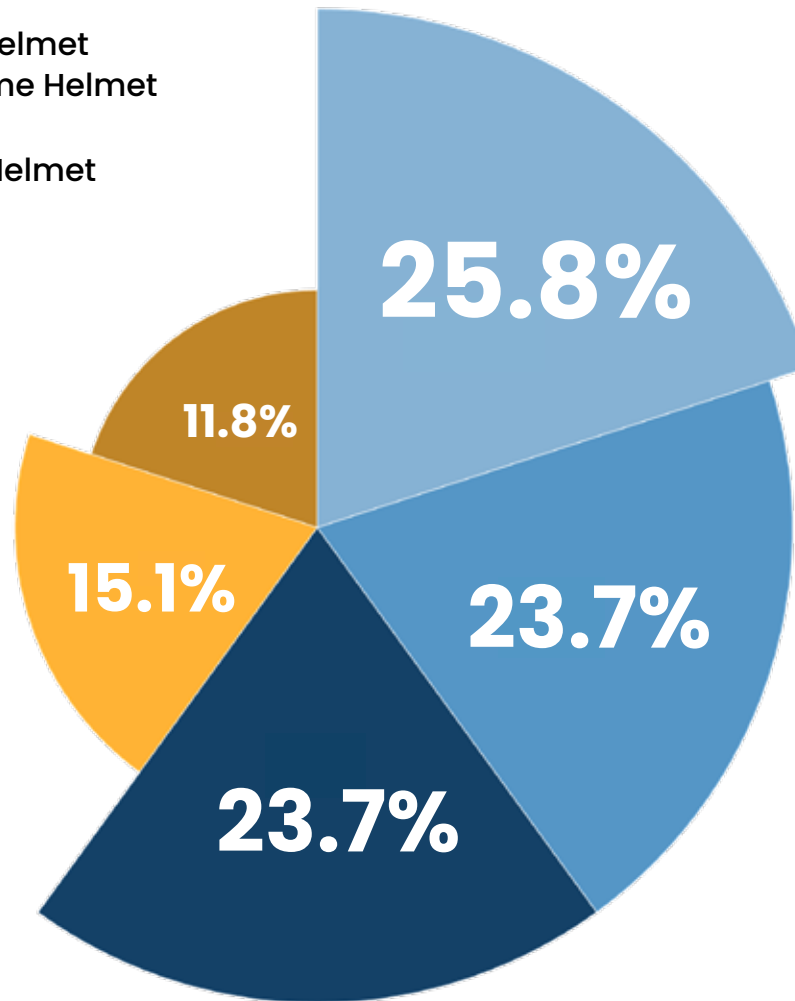
- Fit them with your helmet strap system to make sure the two are compatible
- Side shields, or wrap-around frames, are a must to protect your entire eye
- The darker, the better. If you can see your eyes through the lens, they are not dark enough

Headware | Helmets

- Black Diamond Vapor Helmet
- Black Diamond Half Dome Helmet
- Petzl Sirocco Helmet
- Black Diamond Vector Helmet
- Petzl Meteor Helmet



Black Diamond Vapor Helmet



Design Principles

Your dome is important, give it the protection it deserves! Helmets should be lightweight, ventilated, simple, and effective. Look for a CE or UIAA certification to ensure it meets international safety standards. A good fit will ensure your helmet doesn't slide back and forth on your head when whipping it around.



Black Diamond Half Dome Helmet

3 Things to Look for in Helmets:

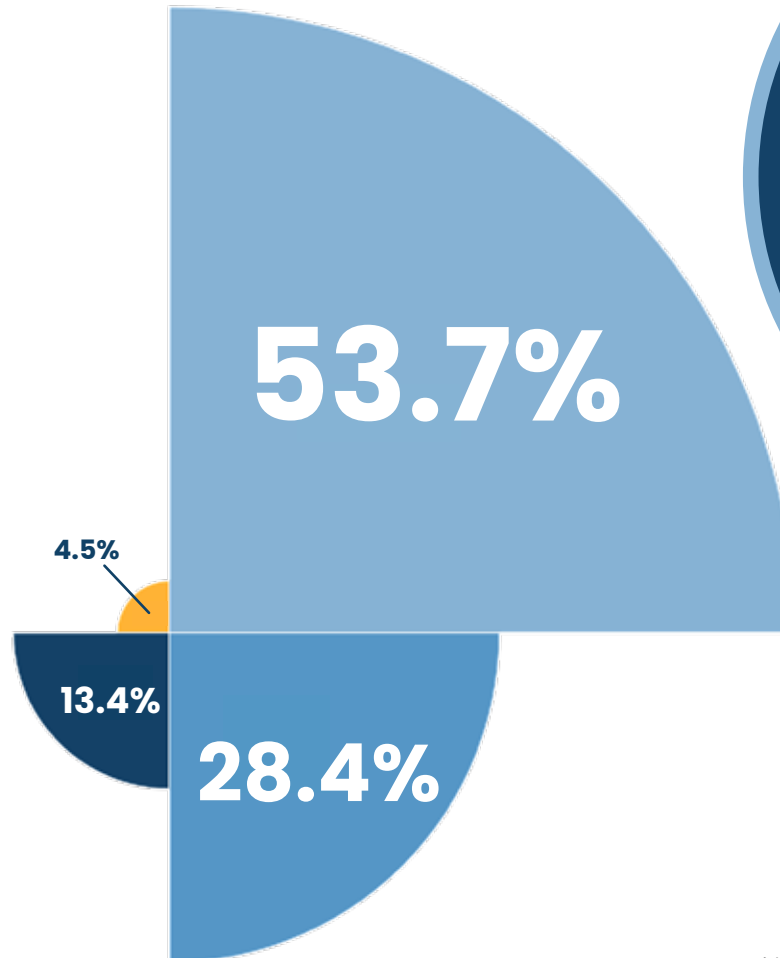
- Ventilation is key: a hot head is uncomfortable
- Straps or slots allow you to secure your headlamp to your helmet
- Try it on with a beanie, a ball cap, and nothing underneath, it should fit well with all



Petzl Sirocco Helmet

Headware | Goggles

- Smith I/O Goggles
- Smith I/O Mag Goggles
- Smith Range Goggles
- Smith Squad Goggles



Design Principles

While Glacier Glasses will work during the majority of conditions, goggles can come in very handy in certain circumstances. High winds kicking up dust can wreak havoc on contacts even with the improved coverage of glacier glasses, and having a clear lens for night climbing will make your life much easier. Almost any goggles will work, and there's no need to spring for pricey, multi-featured goggles you might see on the ski hill.

Smith I/O Mag Goggles



Smith Range Goggles

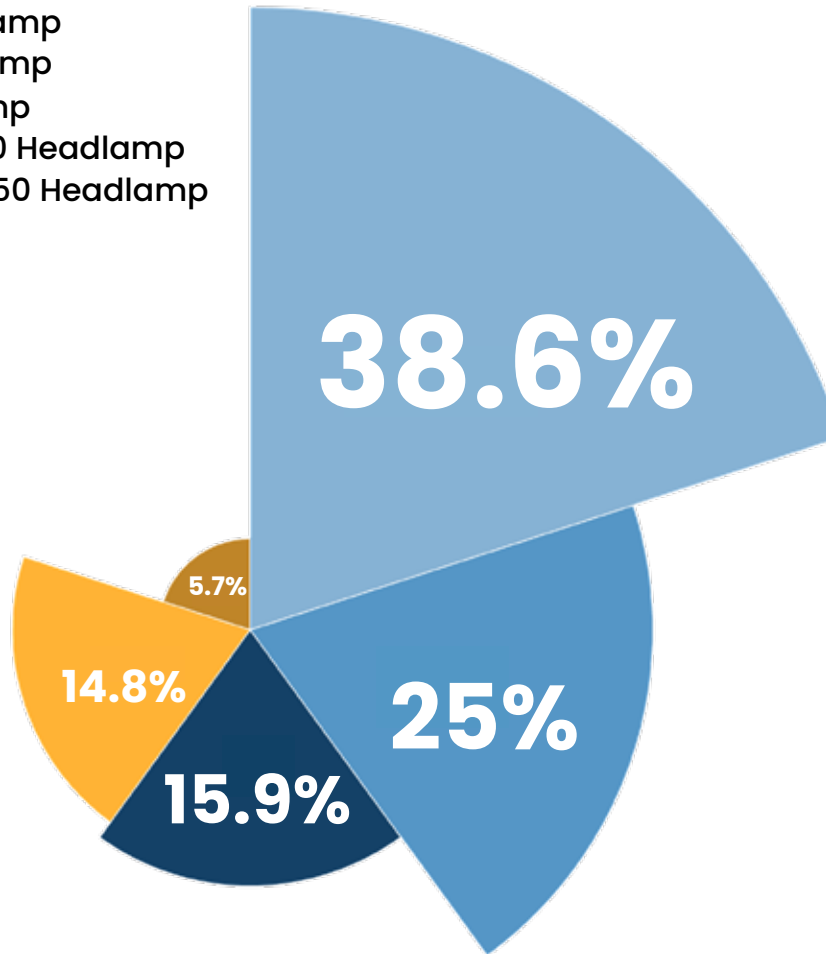


3 Things to Look for in Goggles:

- Make sure they fit with your helmet for maximum compatibility
- Always carry a case or soft cover in your pack, scratched lenses suck
- If possible, have two lenses - dark and light (preferably clear) for changing conditions

Headware | Headlamps

- Petzi ACTIK CORE Headlamp
- Petzi Swift RL Pro Headlamp
- Petzi TIKKA 350 Headlamp
- Black Diamond Spot 400 Headlamp
- Black Diamond Storm 450 Headlamp



Design Principles

Headlamps are a vital part of a successful alpine climb. If possible, fit your headlamp with your current helmet before purchasing. Most modern headlamps have a lock to ensure they don't turn on accidentally, but if yours doesn't flip one of your batteries around when it's not in use to avoid accidental energy drain.

Petzi Swift RL Pro Headlamp



Petzi TIKKA 350 Headlamp



3 Things to Look for in Headlamps:

- Remember - less is more and simple is always better than complex
- Rechargeable headlamps work, but a hybrid that can take batteries too is a safe backup
- Make sure your headlamp is at least 350 Lumens and has a burn time of at least 5 hours



Glacier Glasses

Julbo Shield Glacier Glasses

“The Julbo shield glacier glasses have been my go-to shades for several years because I can rely on them to always provide enough eye protection on bright days.”

– **Lacie Smith**

Multiple Cascades Summit & Ski Descents



Helmets

Black Diamond Half Dome

“The Black Diamond half dome has managed to remain nearly indestructible for the past 4 years that I have owned it.”

– **Evan Redman**

12+ Summits in the Cascades



Headlamps

Petzl ACTIK CORE Headlamp

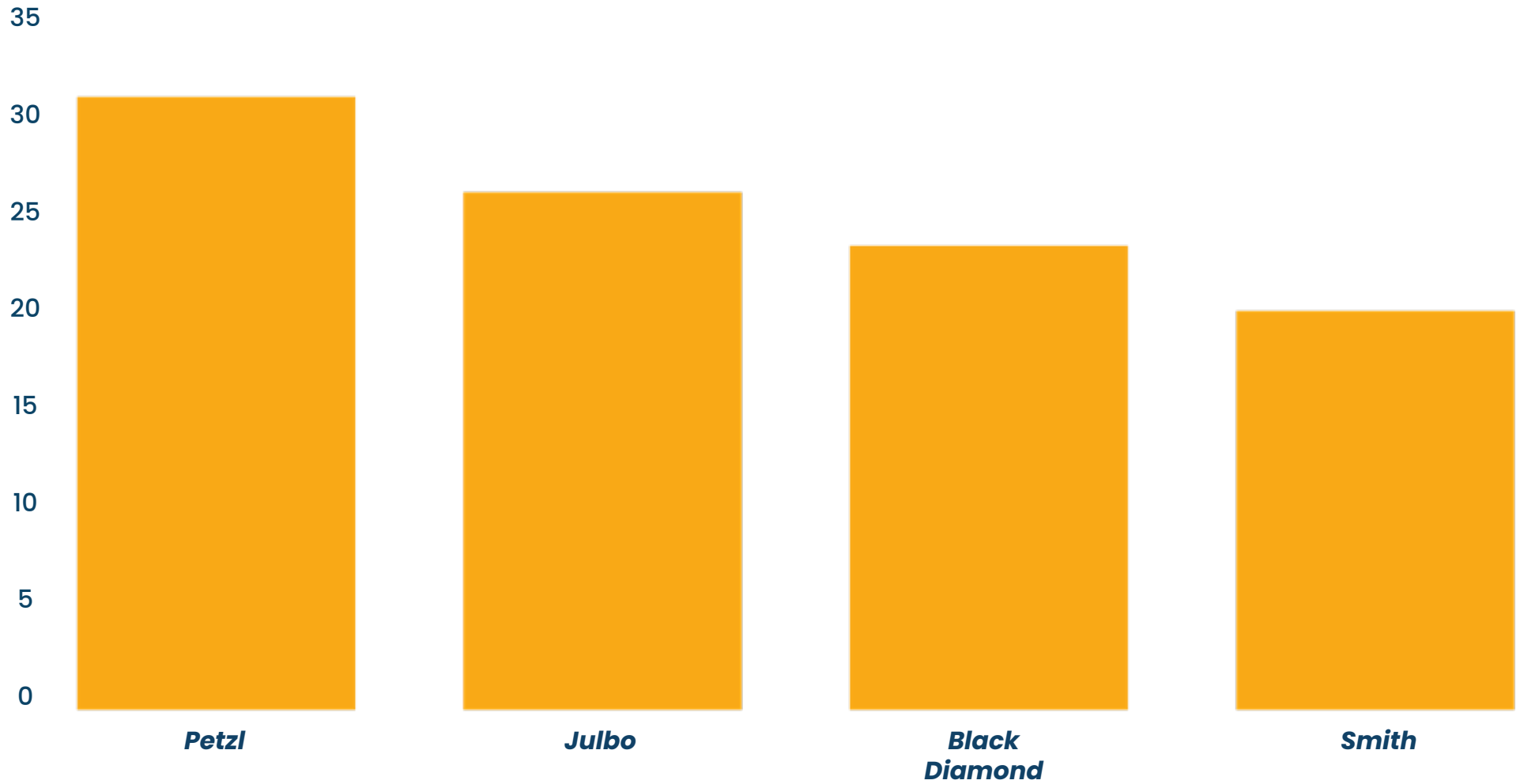
“The Petzl Actik combines plenty of lumens with battery power long enough for even the longest nights on Mount Rainier.”

– **Abby Westling**

37+ Rainier Summits

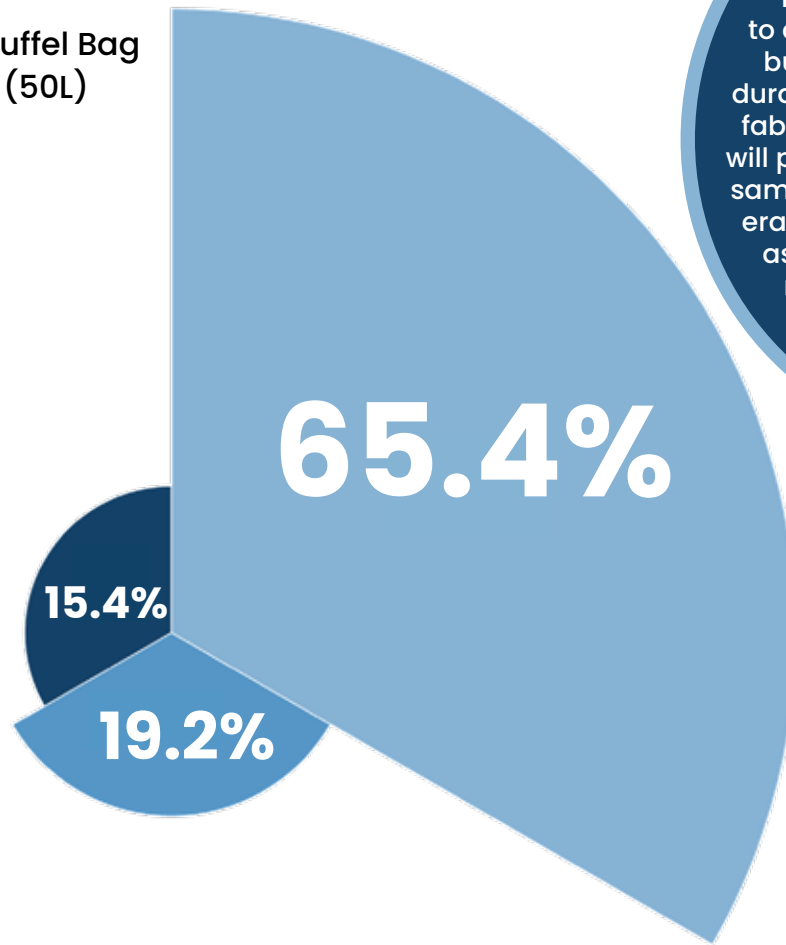


Top **Headwear** Brands



Duffles | 40-50L Duffles

- Patagonia Black Hole Duffel 40L
- Black Diamond Stonehauler 45L Duffel Bag
- The North Face Base Camp Duffel (50L)



Design Principles

You wouldn't think there is much to a single-compartment duffel bag, but some brands just get it right. A durable, waterproof, or water-resistant fabric is key given the abuse this bag will probably suffer on your expeditions, same with a strong, large, easy-to-operate zipper. Bags that can be carried as backpacks are nice, but keep in mind it's likely to be pulled on a sled, strapped to a mule or Yak's back then actually carried on yours.



Black Diamond Stonehauler 45L Duffel Bag



The North Face Base Camp Duffel

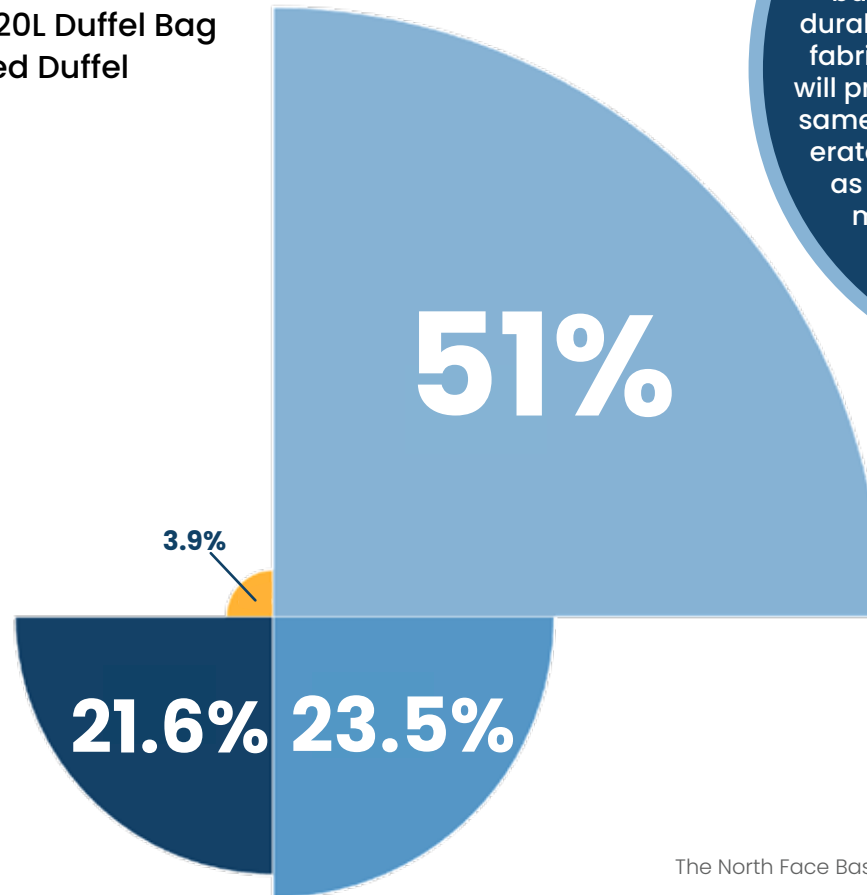
3 Things to Look for in Duffles:

- Durable but lightweight fabric
- Reinforced webbing on handles and straps
- Single large compartment

Duffles | 100L Duffles

- Patagonia Black Hole Duffel 100L
- The North Face Base Camp Duffel - XL (132L)
- Black Diamond Stonehauler 120L Duffel Bag
- REI Co-op Big Haul 90 Recycled Duffel

Patagonia Black Hole Duffel 100L



Design Principles

You wouldn't think there is much to a single-compartment duffel bag, but some brands just get it right. A durable, waterproof, or water-resistant fabric is key given the abuse this bag will probably suffer on your expeditions, same with a strong, large, easy-to-operate zipper. Bags that can be carried as backpacks are nice, but keep in mind it's likely to be pulled on a sled, strapped to a mule or Yak's back then actually carried on yours.

Black Diamond Stonehauler 120L



The North Face Base Camp Duffel



3 Things to Look for in Duffles:

- Durable but lightweight fabric
- Reinforced webbing on handles and straps
- Single large compartment



30-40L Duffels

Patagonia Black Hole Duffel 40L

"Patagonia makes a great product when it comes to duffel bags. If I could, I would buy each size they made. I love how easy they make sorting gear."

- **Sam Hoffman**
20+ Rainier Summits



100L Duffles

The North Face Base Camp Duffel

"The North Face Basecamp XXL allows me to easily throw all of my gear for a 3-5 day trip in the back of my car without thinking twice!"

- **Evan Redman**
12+ Cascades Summits

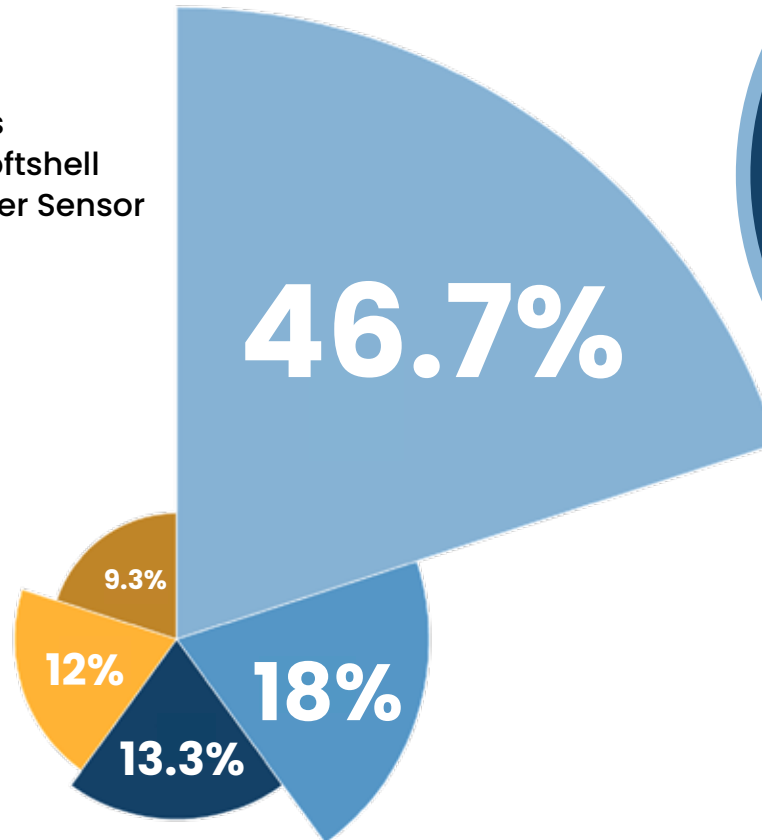


Gloves | Light Gloves

- Petzl Cordex Belay Gloves
- Black Diamond Crag Gloves
- Black Diamond Trekker Gloves
- Black Diamond Lightweight Softshell
- Outdoor Research Stormtracker Sensor



Petzl Cordex Belay Gloves



Design Principles

If you're climbing during the spring, summer, or early fall, you'll likely be wearing your lightweight gloves for most of your climb. They should protect your hands from wind, sun, and abrasive snow in the event you need to perform an ice axe arrest. They should also be light and breathable enough that you don't overheat. This means a mix of water-resistant yet breathable fabric is best.



Black Diamond Crag Gloves

3 Things to Look for in Light Gloves:

- A durable leather palm helps grip ice axes and trekking poles
- Touchscreen fingertips are becoming more common & are nice to have
- Look for streamlined finger boxes (narrow profile) and short, simple wrist cuffs



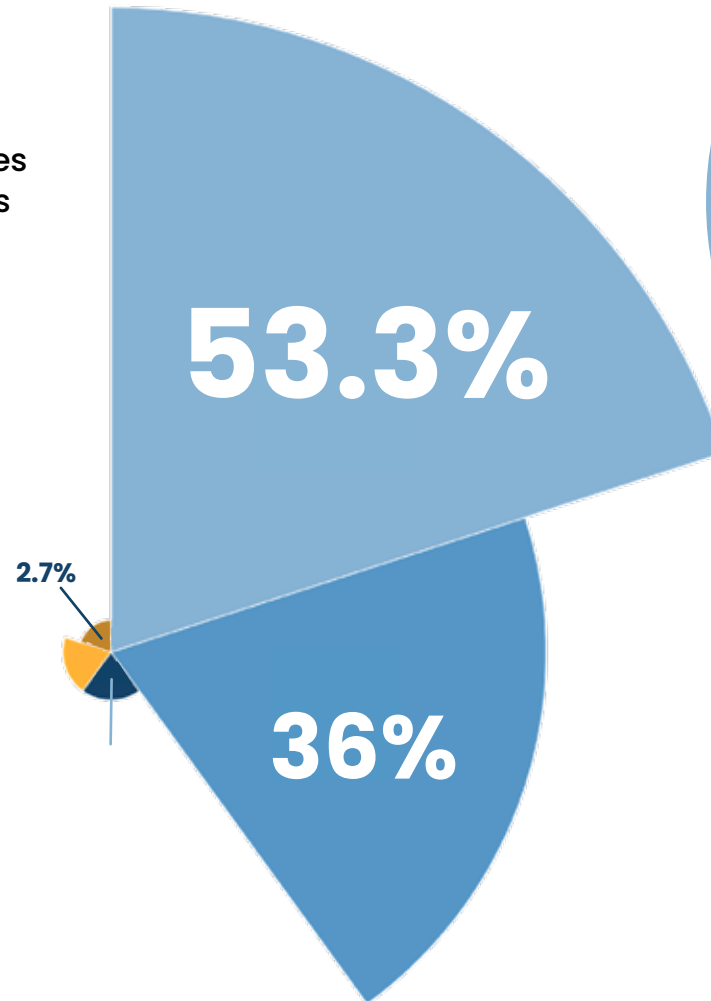
BD Lightweight Softshell Gloves

Gloves | Medium Gloves

- Black Diamond Patrol Gloves
- Kinco Premium Ski Gloves
- Rab Pivot GTX Gloves
- Black Diamond Punisher Gloves
- Black Diamond Kingpin Gloves



Black Diamond Patrol Gloves



Design Principles

While your medium-weight glove's main goal is to keep you warm, you should still have enough dexterity to be able to perform most tasks - buckling your helmet, grabbing a snack, and adjusting your harness should all be doable without taking off your gloves. Look for "articulation" - the glove should have a hand shape (natural curvature of fingers) integrated into the design. This helps with dexterity.



Kinco Premium Ski Gloves



Rab Pivot GTX Gloves

3 Things to Look for in Medium Gloves:

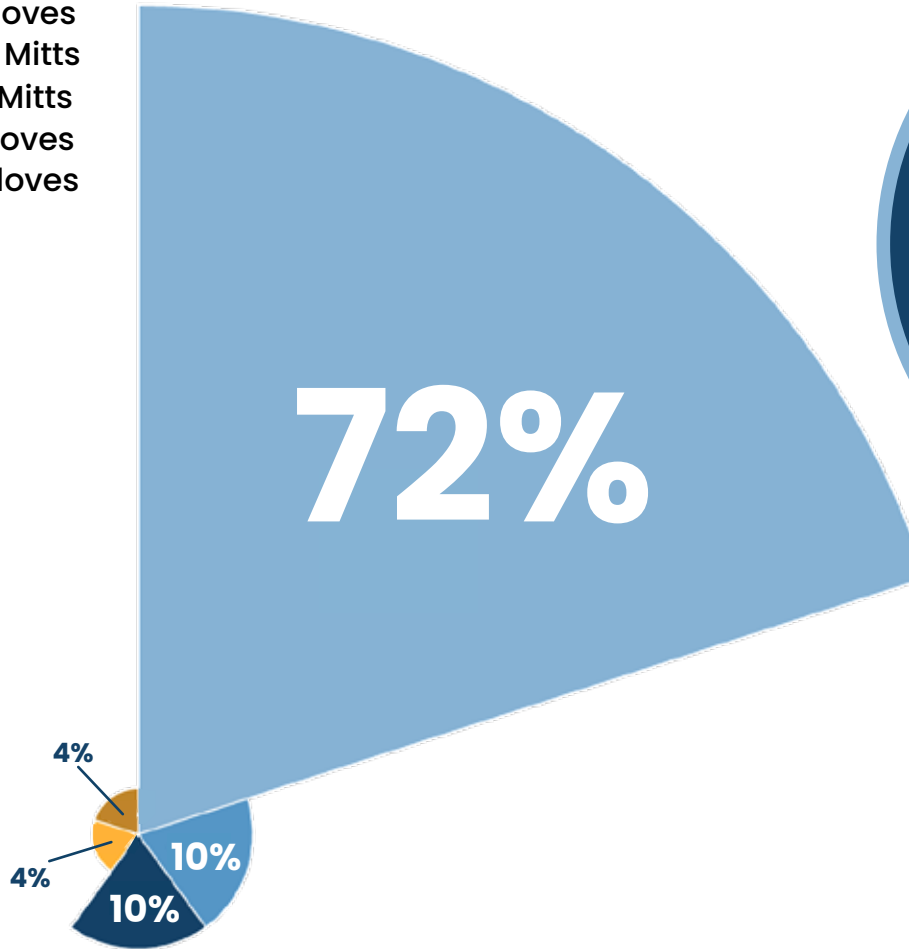
- Medium Insulation - think "ski glove" warmth
- Waterproof outer fabric will keep you warm and dry
- A longer, adjustable wrist cuff to keep out snow

Gloves | Heavy Gloves & Mitts

- Black Diamond Guide Gloves
- Black Diamond Mercury Mitts
- Outdoor Research Alti II Mitts
- Black Diamond Patrol Gloves
- Outdoor Research Alti Gloves



Black Diamond Guide Gloves



Design Principles

When it's seriously cold, heavy-weight gloves or mitts are your best defense against cold hands. We prefer gloves since they offer a lot more dexterity. However, in some extremely cold high-altitude situations, mitts are the way to go.



Black Diamond Mercury Mitts



Outdoor Research Alti II Mitts

3 Things to Look for in Heavy Gloves:

- Heavily insulated - these are parkas for your hands to keep them warm
- Waterproof outer fabric will keep you protected and dry
- A long cuff or gauntlet that can cinch over your sleeve layers



Light Gloves

Petzl Cordex Belay Gloves

“ I probably use my Petzl belay gloves about 90% of the time on Rainier climbs. They're lightweight and comfortable but still keep my hands noticeably warmer than other similar gloves.”

- **Joshua Geiser**
10+ Rainier Summits



Medium Gloves

Black Diamond Patrol Gloves

“ The Black Diamond Patrol glove is the most versatile on the market. I wore it all the way to the top of Everest and back. Warm while still having movement.”

- **Jess Wedel**
8 Himalayan Expeditions



Heavy Gloves & Mitts

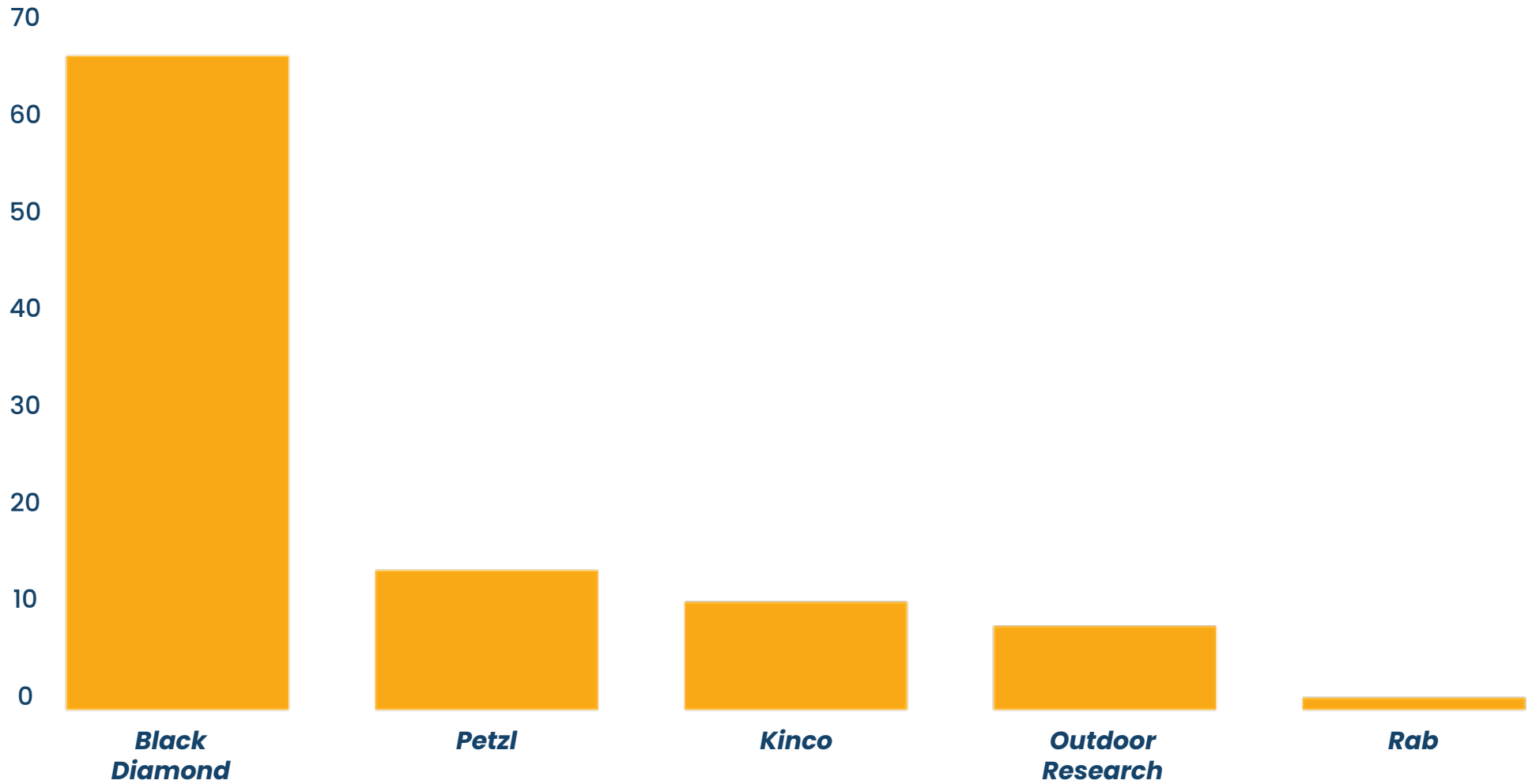
Black Diamond Guide Gloves

“ The guide glove works well for cold summit attempts, allowing for a fair amount of dexterity and ambulating while trapping all the heat. You don't use them often, but they're great when you do.”

- **Michael Bennett**
Multiple Rainier Summits



Top **Glove** Brands

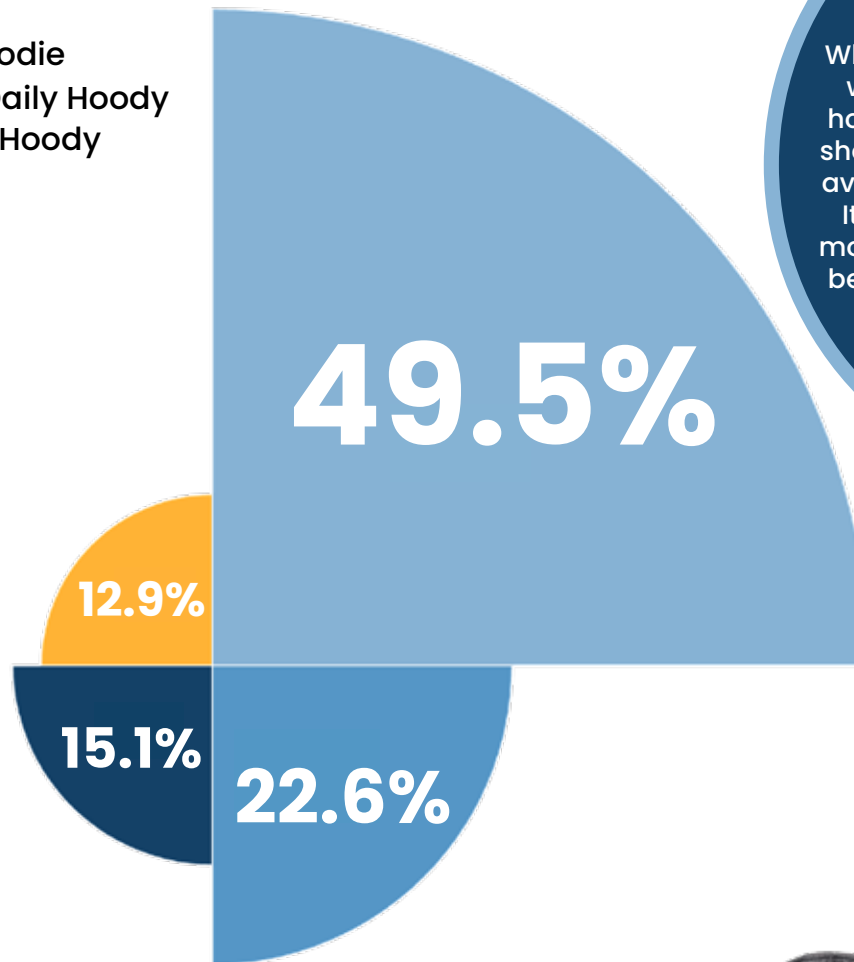


Upper Body | Sun Hoodie

- Bight Gear Solstice Hoodie
- Outdoor Research Echo Hoodie
- Patagonia Capilene Cool Daily Hoodie
- Black Diamond Alpenglow Hoodie



Bight Gear Solstice Hoodie



Design Principles

While other options for base layers exist, we almost always recommend a sun hoodie as your best option. The material should have a “range” with temperature; avoid ultra-light or super-warm options. It should also breathe well, wick away moisture, dry quickly, and if it is synthetic be coated with an anti-microbial treatment to reduce odor. A generous fit that allows airflow and helps with ventilation is also key.



Outdoor Research Echo Hoodie



Black Diamond Alpenglow Hoodie

3 Things to Look for in Sun Hoodies:

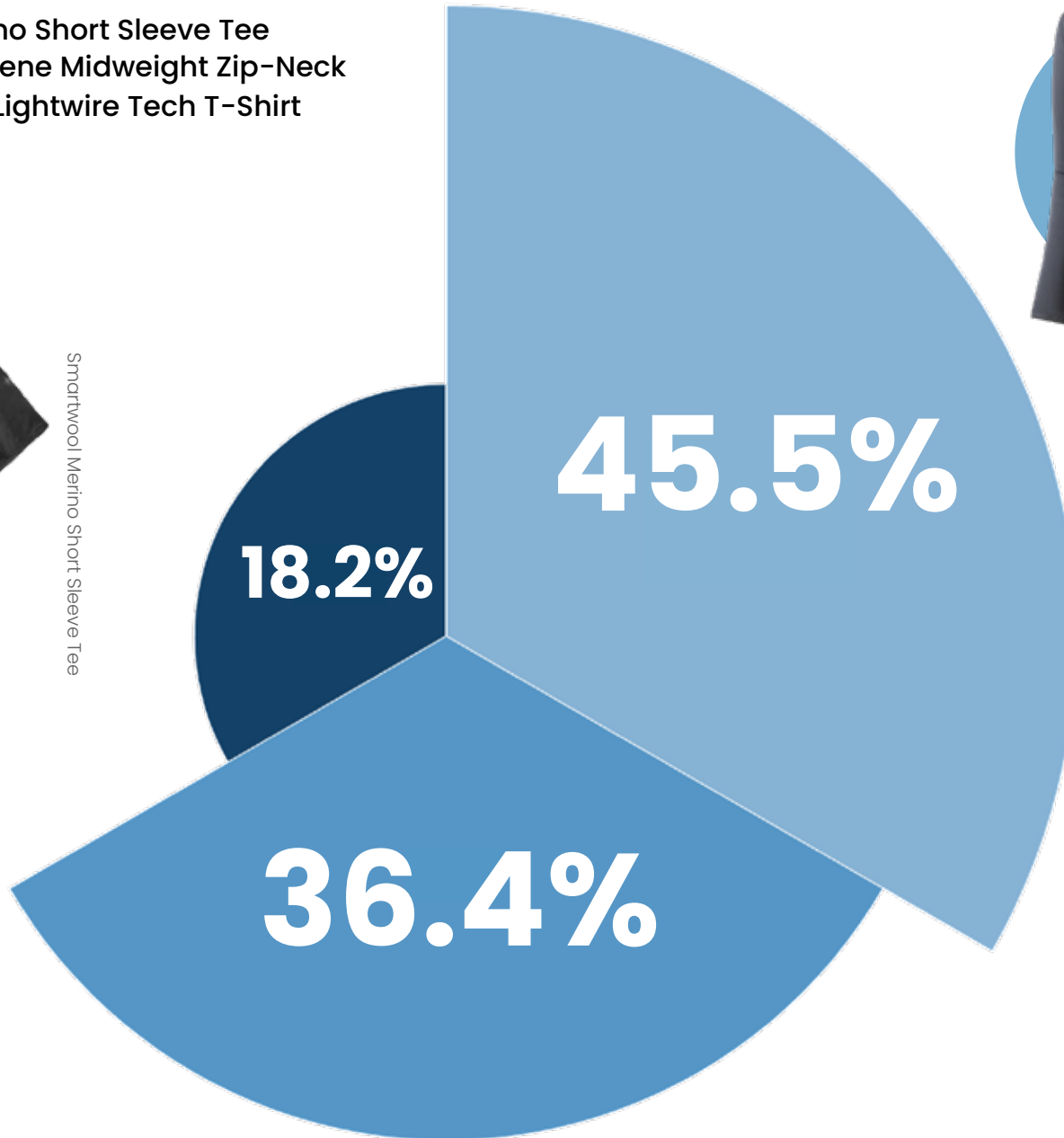
- Big hood and long sleeves with thumbholes to protect you from the sun
- Soft “hand” or feel - you might be wearing this for weeks against your skin
- Light colors - dark colors absorb sunlight, and it can get HOT above the treeline

Upper Body | Non-Hooded Baselayer

- Smartwool Merino Short Sleeve Tee
- Patagonia Capilene Midweight Zip-Neck
- Black Diamond Lightwire Tech T-Shirt



Smartwool Merino Short Sleeve Tee



Patagonia Capilene Midweight Zip-Neck



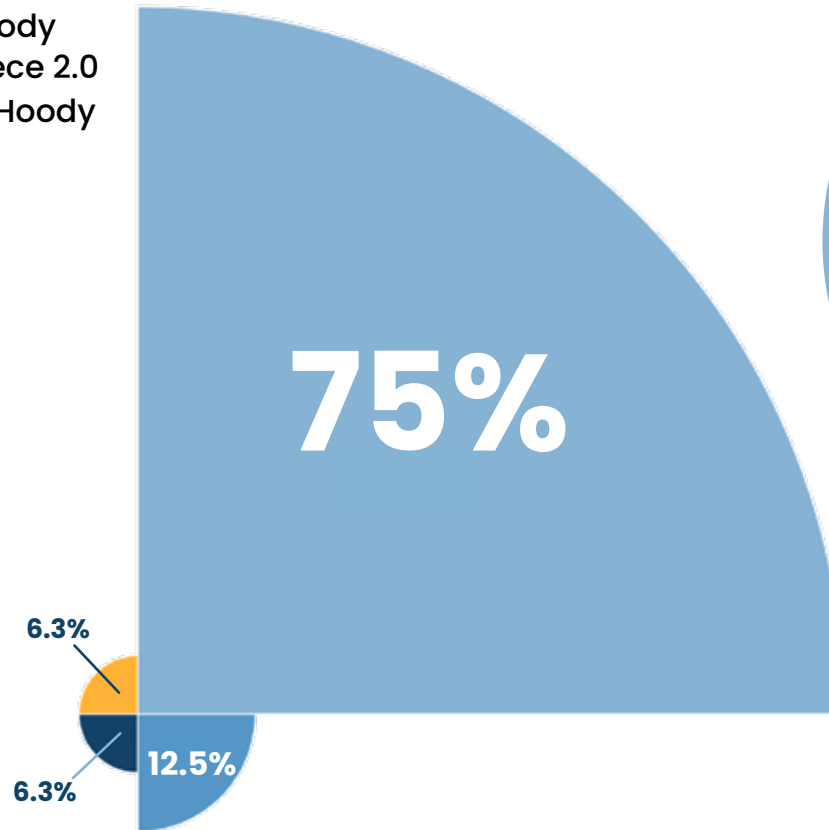
Black Diamond Lightwire Tech T-Shirt

Upper Body | Lightweight Insulating Layer

- Patagonia R1 Air Full-Zip Hoody
- Bight Gear Fissure Tech Fleece 2.0
- Black Diamond Coefficient Hoody
- Arc'teryx Gamma Hoody



R1 Air Full Zip



Design Principles

Your lightweight layer should be just warm enough to insulate you from a light wind or be worn on a moderately warm alpine start. Since it will need to stack under your outer layers, go for a more “form-fitting” style than you would with mid-weight insulation or even a sun hoody.



Black Diamond Coefficient Hoody



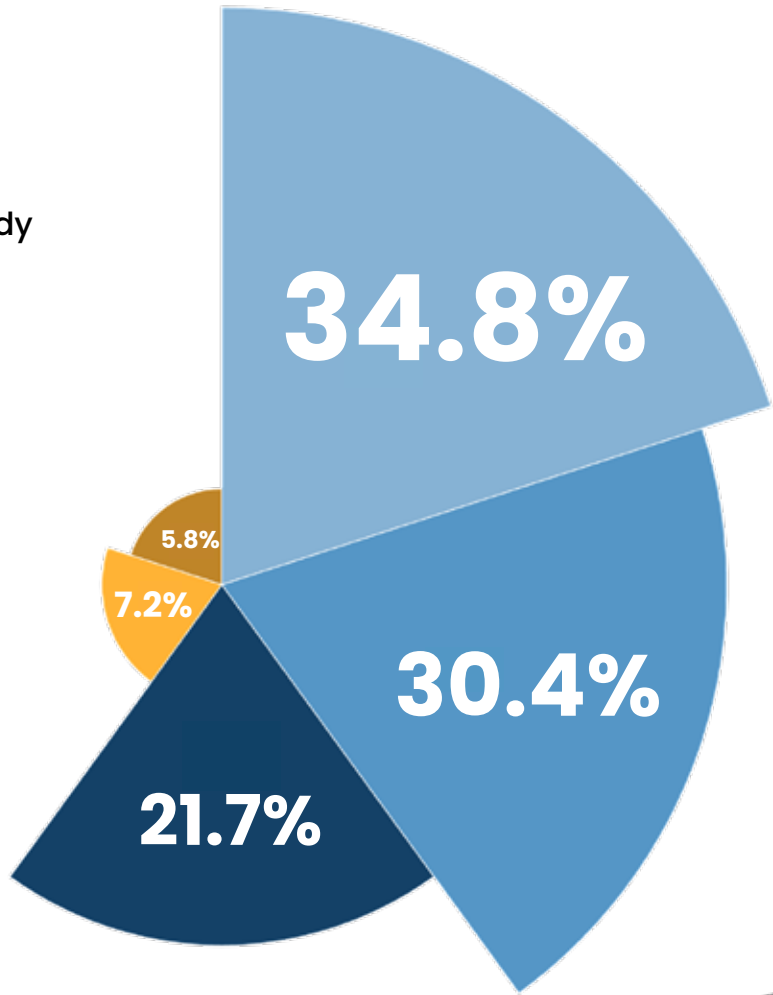
Bight Gear Fissure Tech Fleece 2.0

3 Things to Look for in Lightweight Insulating Layers:

- A hood that can fit over or under a helmet
- Minimal insulation, maximum breathability – Technical fleece is our favorite
- Full zip is recommended so you can take it on/off when adjusting layers

Upper Body | Midweight Insulating Layer

- Arc'teryx Atom Hoody
- Patagonia Nano Puff Hoody
- Patagonia DAS Light Hoody
- Bight Gear Swelter Jacket
- Black Diamond First Light Hoody



Arc'teryx Atom Hoody



Patagonia Nano Puff Hoody



Bight Gear Swelter Jacket

Design Principles

Once things start to cool down you'll want more insulation. Breathability takes a back seat to warmth here, and while a water-resistant face fabric is nice, your hardshell is your real protection against the elements. Synthetic or down insulation works well, and stretch side panels and cuffs allow for more movement and mobility.

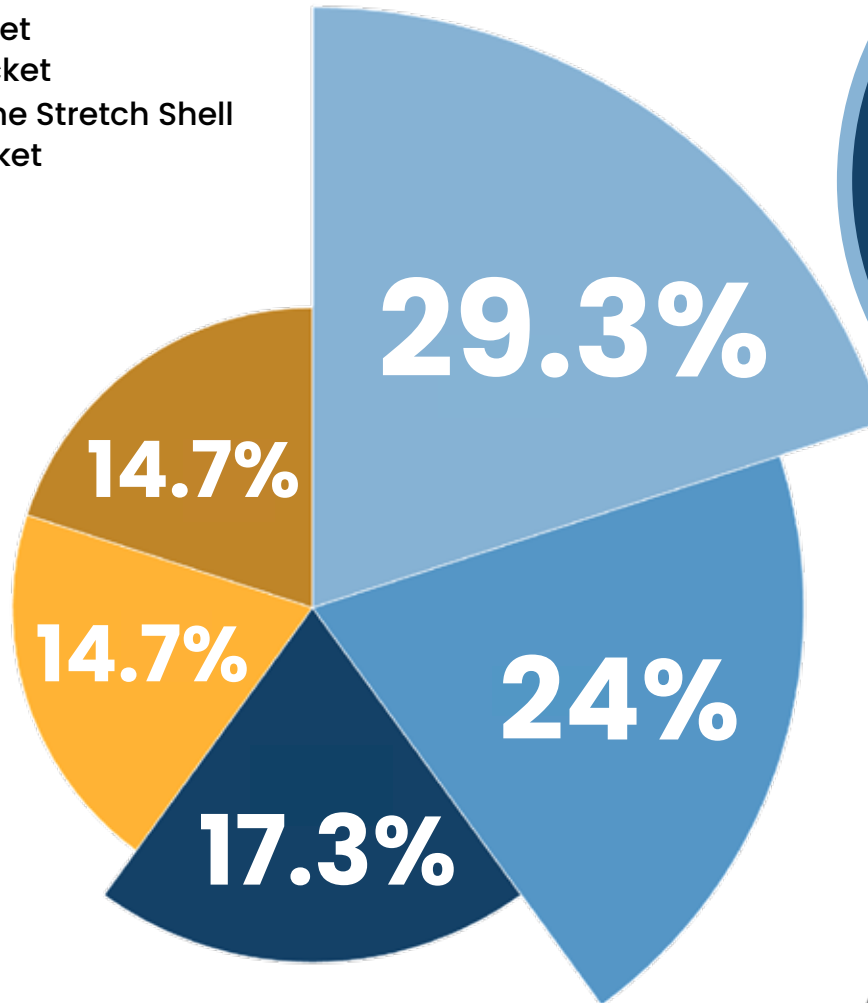
- 3 Things to Look for in Midweight Insulating Layers:**
- Chest and hand pockets are important on this layer (think snacks!)
 - Down, synthetic, heavy fleece, or wool all work - we prefer down or synthetic insulation
 - A hood that can fit over or under a helmet, with a collar that comes up to the bottom of your nose

Upper Body | Hardshell Jacket

- Arc'teryx Beta AR Jacket
- Arc'teryx Alpha SV Jacket
- Black Diamond Highline Stretch Shell
- Rab Namche GTX Jacket



Arc'teryx Beta AR Jacket



Design Principles

When sleet hits the fan, you want your hardshell to be as bomb-proof as possible. We go by the "20/20" rule - at least 20Kmm waterproof rating, and no more than 20K grams of breathability. Some companies claim their hard shells can breathe and protect you, but we'd rather reduce breathability with our layering system than risk getting soaked. Also, the jury's still out on pit zips... our opinion is pretty much split on those.



Black Diamond Highline Stretch Shell



Black Diamond Helio active

3 Things to Look for in Hardshell Jackets:

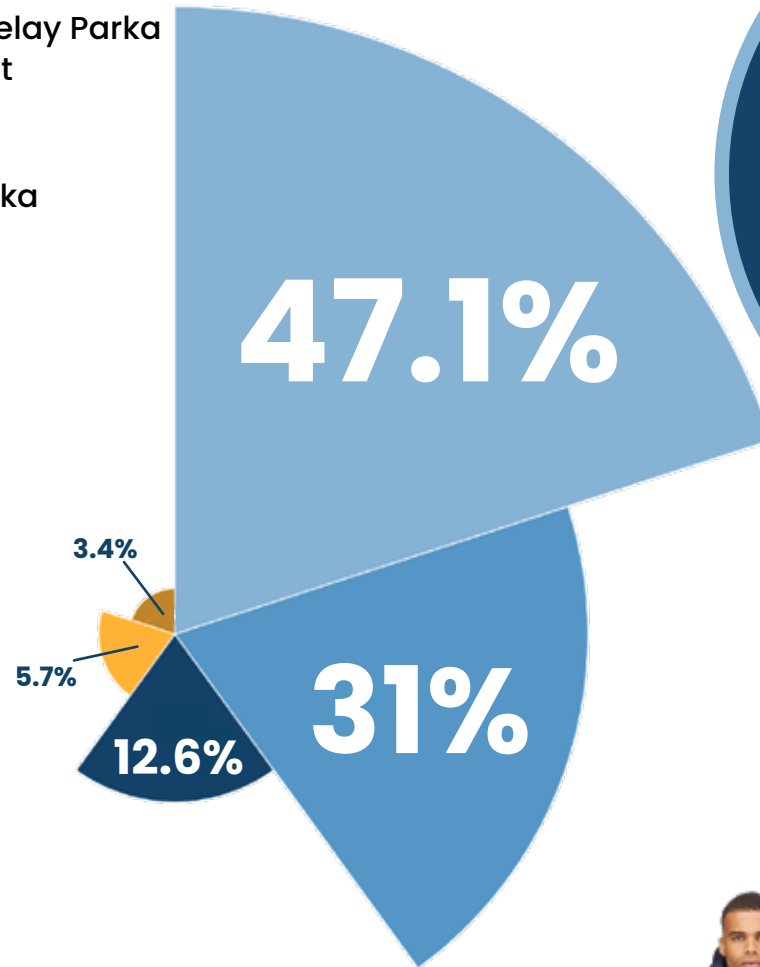
- Loose fit - should fit comfortably over 2-3 other layers
- Waterproof fabric with waterproof zippers and helmet-compatible hood
- Exterior chest pocket that can fit your smartphone

Upper Body | Expedition Parka

- Mountain Hardwear Phantom Belay Parka
- Mountain Hardwear Nilas Jacket
- Rab Positron Pro Jacket
- Bight Gear Caldera Down Parka
- Black Diamond Vision Down Parka



Mountain Hardwear Phantom Belay Down Parka



Design Principles

Think of half a sleeping bag for your upper body. Just like with sleeping bags, down has a better warmth-to-weight ratio and packability than synthetic, but becomes less effective when wet. Go for at least 800 downfill power and 200 grams of insulation. A belay (second) zipper is a handy option. Inside pockets keep gloves, snacks, and water from freezing.



Mountain Hardwear Nilas Jacket



Rab Positron Pro Jacket

3 Things to Look for in Expedition Parkas:

- Warmth! This is your biggest, baddest, warmest layer
- Size up - your parka should fit over all of your other layers (4-5)
- Water-resistant face fabric comes in handy and adds durability

RMI Guides Top Picks



Sun Hoodie

Outdoor Research Echo Hoodie

"I sweat easily so these super light, breathable hoodies work super well for me. When we got them as uniform, I bought 3 more a week later."

- **Dominic Cifelli**
50+ Rainier Summits



Midweight Insulating Layer

Arc'teryx Atom Hoody

"The Arc'teryx Atom - Super light, comfortable and high quality. Breaths decently as well."

- **Daniel May**
10+ Rainier Summits



Expedition Parka

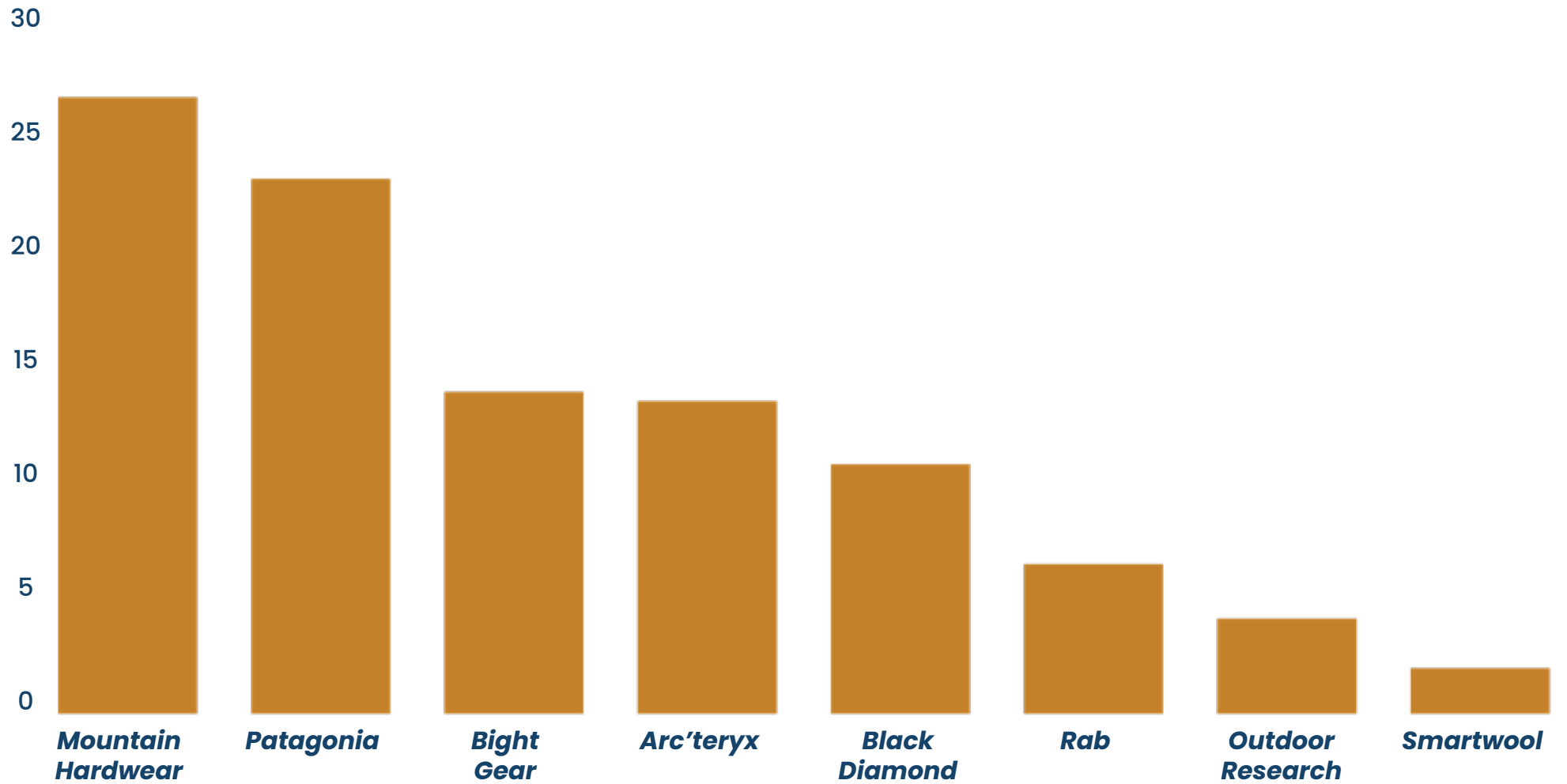
Mountain Hardwear Phantom Belay Down Parka

"The Mountain Hardwar Phatom Belay Jacket is the industry standard for expedition parkas. Warmer than one can imagine, with a great design."

- **Sam Hoffman**
20+ Rainier Summits



Top **Upper Body** Brands

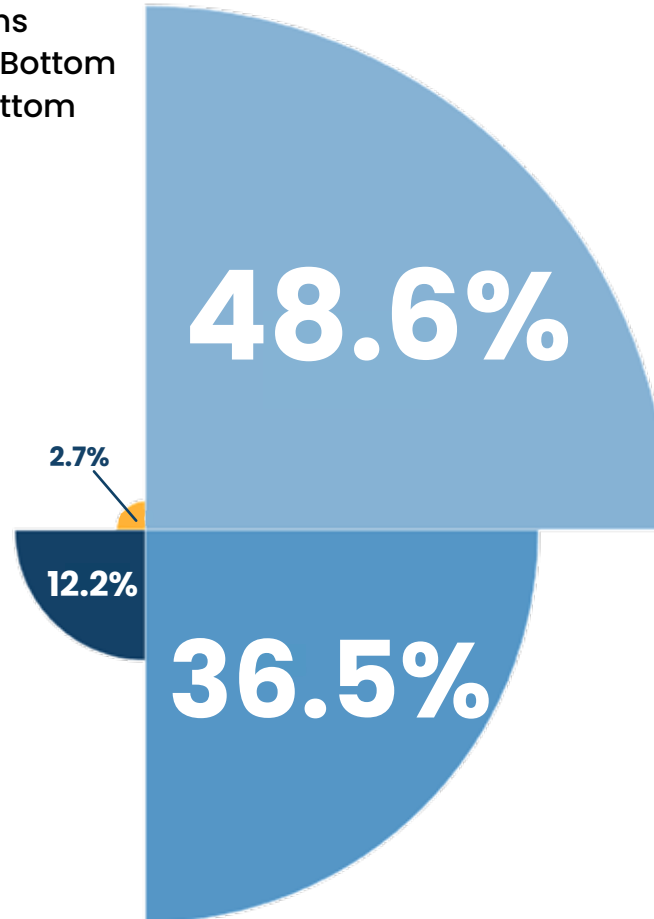


Lower Body | Baselayer Bottoms

- Patagonia Capilene Midweight Bottoms
- Smartwool Classic All-Season Merino Bottom
- Black Diamond Solution 150 Merino Bottom
- Icebreaker Merino 200 Oasis Leggings



Patagonia Capilene Midweight Bottoms



Design Principles

Just like on your upper body, you're looking for a baselayer bottom fabric with range, something that works at a variety of temperatures. Merino wool is a Guide favorite, and a lot of RMI's female guides use leggings they wear daily instead of springing for new "long johns".



Smartwool Classic All-Season Merino Bottom



Black Diamond Solution 150 Merino Bottom

3 Things to Look for in Baselayer Bottoms:

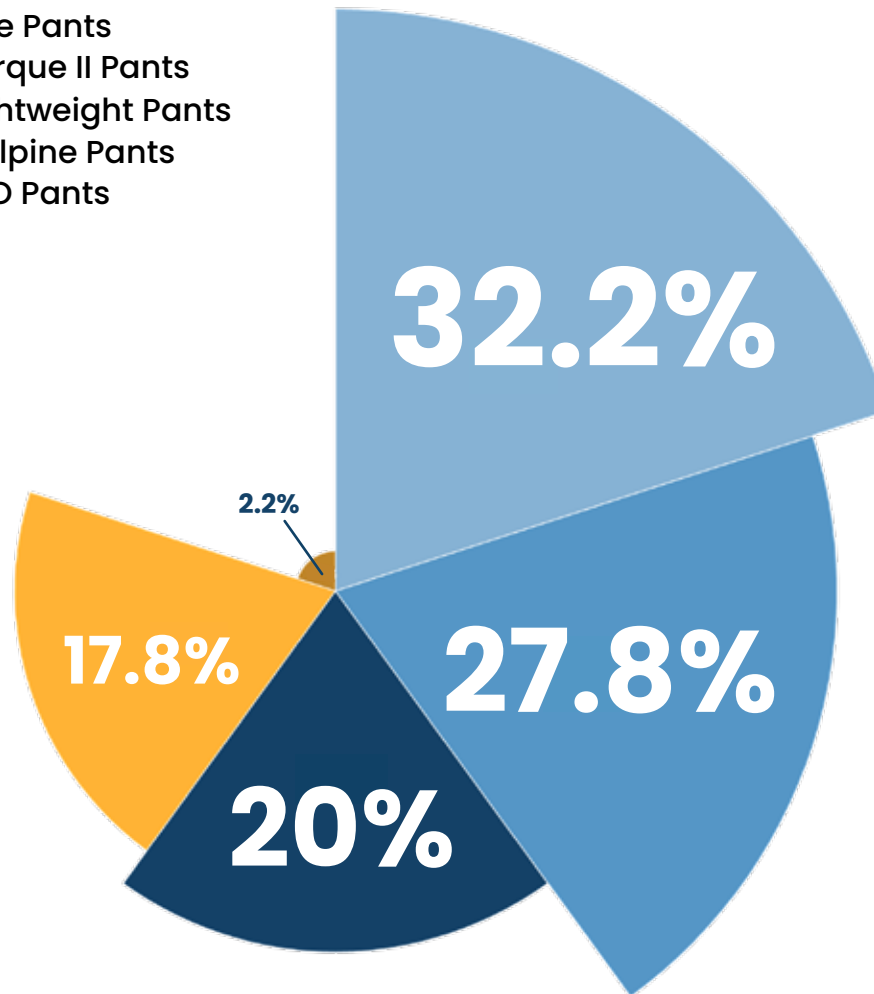
- A fly is convenient... for men and women using a funnel
- Stick with light to medium weights, any heavier (expedition weight) and you'll be sweating!
- Synthetic, wool, or a blend of both all work.
Decide which is more comfortable against your skin

Lower Body | Climbing Pants

- Black Diamond Alpine Pants
- Outdoor Research Cirque II Pants
- Arc'teryx Gamma Lightweight Pants
- Patagonia Terravia Alpine Pants
- Mammut Taiss Pro SO Pants



Black Diamond Alpine Pants



Design Principles

Your climbing pants can be worn with or without your base layer. We look for a knit-woven softshell material, which is usually breathable, water-resistant, and comfortable. A narrow profile below the knee is important - baggy pants can catch on crampons. Deep, zippered hand pockets and a thigh pocket are great additions as well.



Outdoor Research Cirque II Pants



Patagonia Terravia Alpine Pants

3 Things to Look for in Climbing Pants:

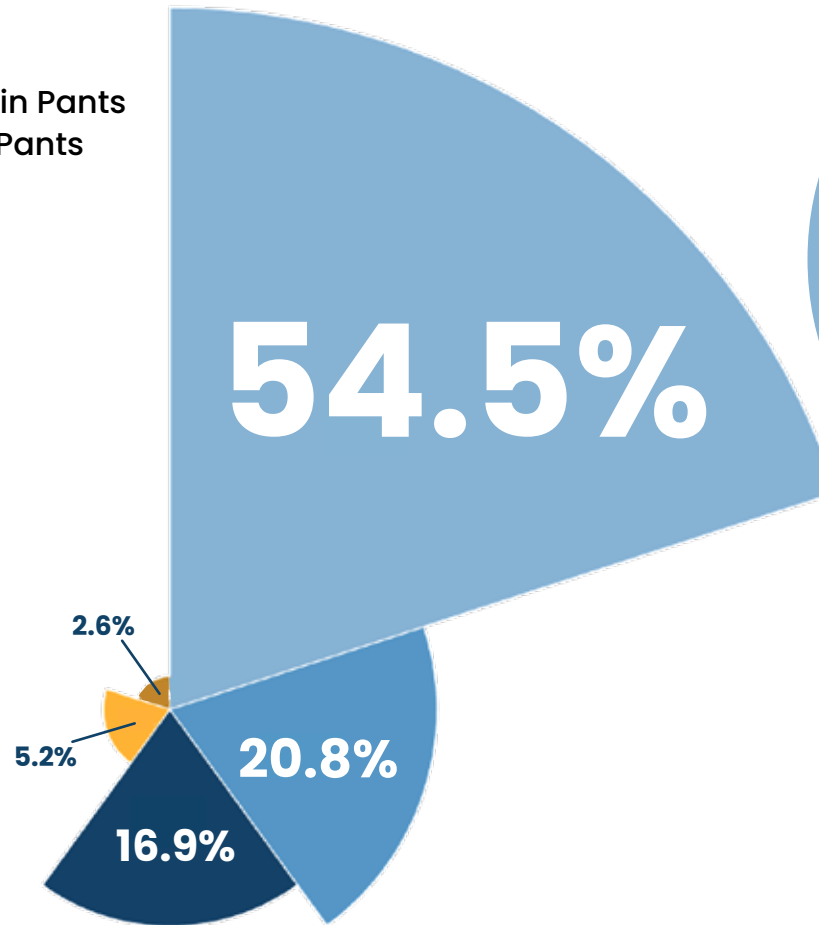
- Light to medium weight soft shell synthetic material
- Belt loops are important
- Avoid insulation or integrated gators

Lower Body | Hardshell Pants

- Arc'teryx Beta Pant
- Rab Kangri GTX Pants
- Black Diamond Stormline Rain Pants
- Norrona Faltetind Gore-Tex Pants
- Arc'teryx Alpine Guide pants



Arc'teryx Beta Pant



Design Principles

Just like with hardshell jackets, your hardshell pants should serve as your final layer of protection against all manner of bad weather. A fly is handy for both sexes, either for ventilation or relieving yourself.



Rab Kangri GTX Pants



Black Diamond Stormline Rain Pants

3 Things to Look for in Hardshell Pants:

- Remember the 20/20 rule for breathability and waterproofness
- Belt loops or some other waist adjustment system are helpful
- Full or 7/8ths side zips, allow for putting on and taking off over mountaineering boots and crampons



Baselayer Bottoms

Patagonia Base Layers

"The Patagonia Capilene Lightweight is the very best long underwear for mountaineering. It has a nice feel against the skin and anything heavier is so overkill that they are never necessary."

- **Dustin Wittmier**
70+ Rainier Summits



Climbing Pants

Black Diamond Alpine Pants

"The Black Diamond Alpine Pant is warm enough for everything from Rainier to most Denali days yet breathes well in the heat."

- **Tatum Watford**
2 Denali Expeditions



Hardshell Pants

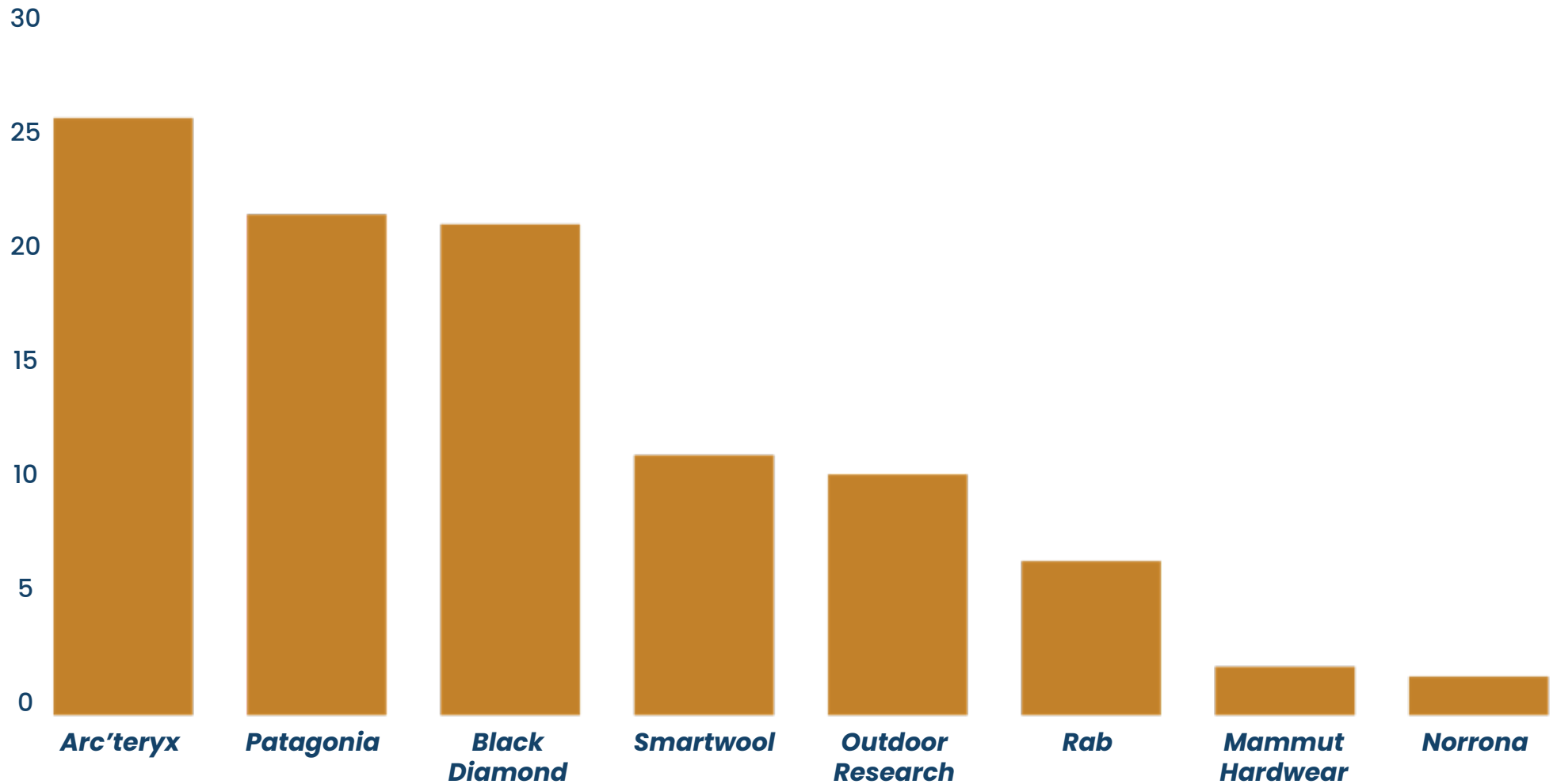
Arcteryx Beta Pants

"The perfect blend of light weight and durability. Fully waterproof with a minimal design that has all the right features and nothing more."

- **Seth Burns**
35+ Rainier Summits

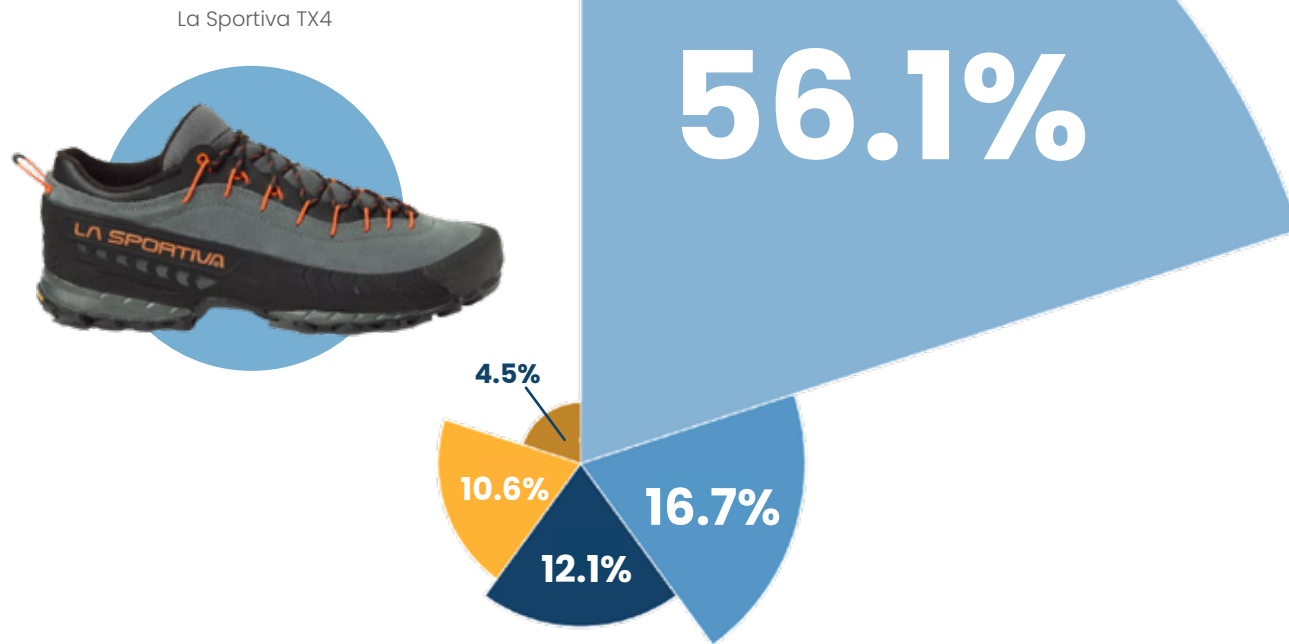


Top **Lower Body** Brands



Footware | Approach Shoes

- La Sportiva TX4
- La Sportiva Mutant
- La Sportiva TX Guide
- Hoka Speedgoat
- Scarpa Crux



Design Principles

Approach shoes are great for climbs with long (you guessed it) approaches, which are plentiful here in the Cascades. They let you knock out those first few miles without putting on your warm, bulky mountaineering boots. We prefer lightweight approach shoes to hiking boots in case we need to store them in our pack after hitting the snowline.

La Sportiva Mutant



Scarpa Crux



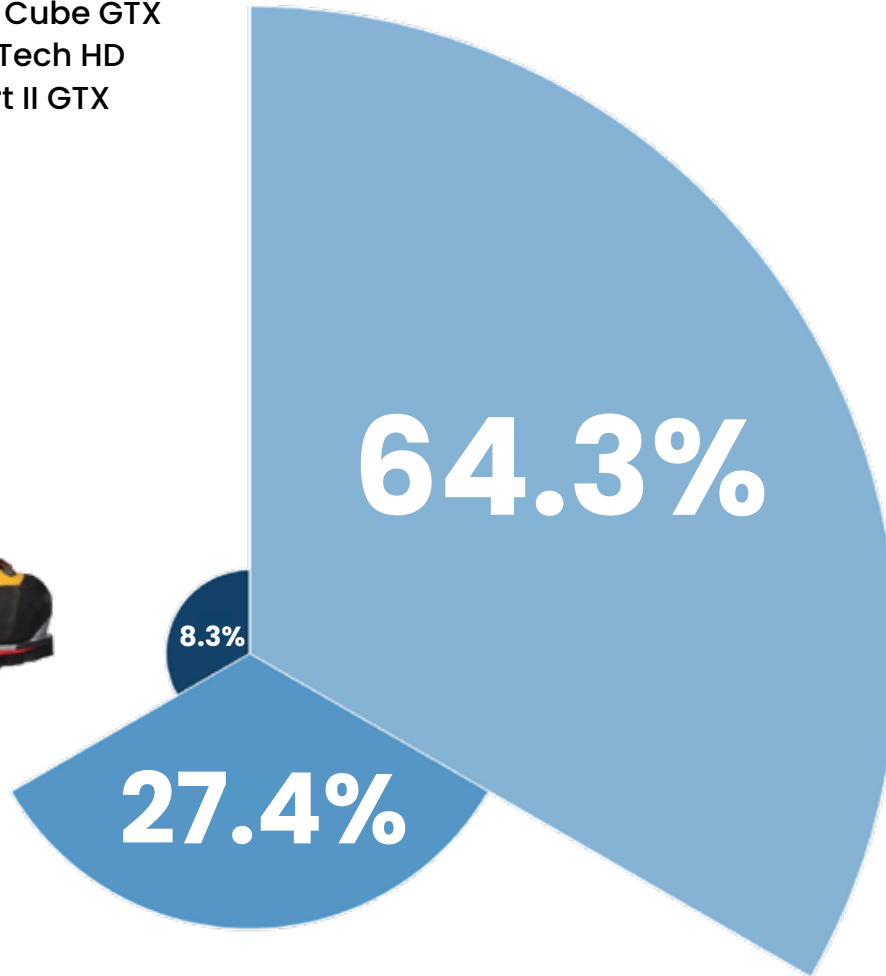
3 Things to Look for in Approach Shoes:

- A good traction sole
- Water-resistant or even waterproof material
- Low or mid-height - more height = more weight, but also = more stability

Footwear | Single Boots

- La Sportiva Nepal Cube GTX
- Scarpa Phantom Tech HD
- Lowa Alpine Expert II GTX

La Sportiva Nepal Cube GTX



Design Principles

Single mountaineering boots are a staple for scrambling above treeline. Usually made from leather or synthetic materials, they should be waterproof and stiff. When fitting, wear the sock combo you plan to climb in and put them on for a good test. Boots are one of THE most important mountaineering gear. Strive for a comfortable fit!

Scarpa Phantom Tech HD



Lowa Alpine Expert II GTX



3 Things to Look for in Single Boots:

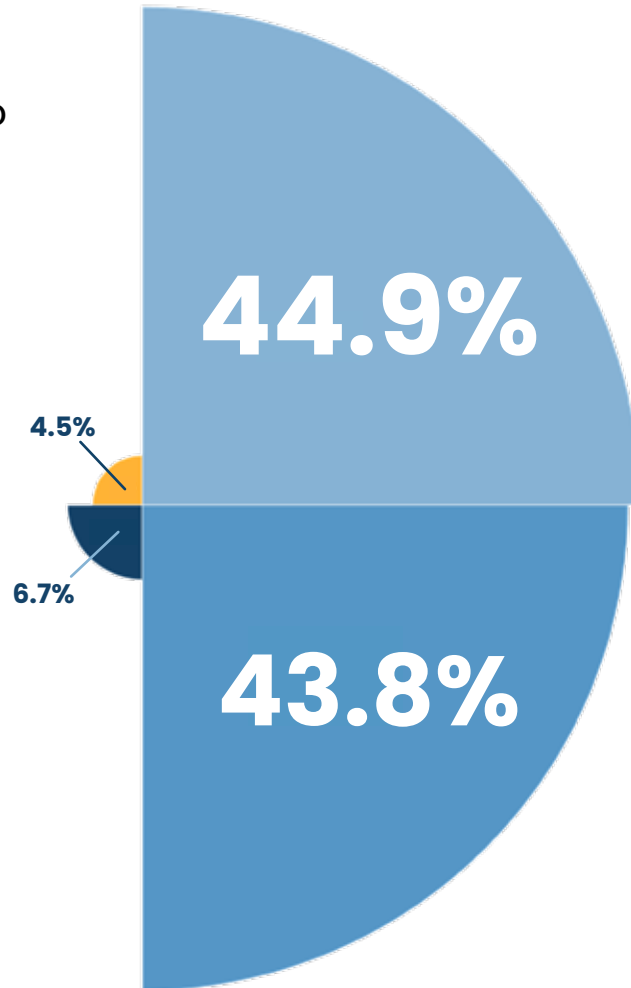
- At least some insulation
- A rigid sole that won't flex with crampons on and aggressive tread
- Heel and toe welts for automatic (step-in) crampon compatibility

Footwear | Double Boots

- La Sportiva G2 Evo
- Scarpa Phantom 6000 HD
- Lowa Expedition 6000 Evo RD
- La Sportiva Spantik



La Sportiva G2 Evo



3 Things to Look for in Double Boots:

- Highly insulated for warmth
- Integrated Gator
- Aggressive tread and crampon compatibility

Design Principles

For climbs where temps will be lower or any kind of winter climbing, consider a double boot. Double boots consist of a removeable insulated inner bootie and a protective outer boot, usually with a built-in gaiter. Besides being warmer than single boots, double boots can also reduce blisters and hot spots. A removable liner is important for drying out the inner boots at camp.



Scarpa Phantom 6000 HD



Lowa Expedition 6000 Evo RD

Footwear | Expedition Boots

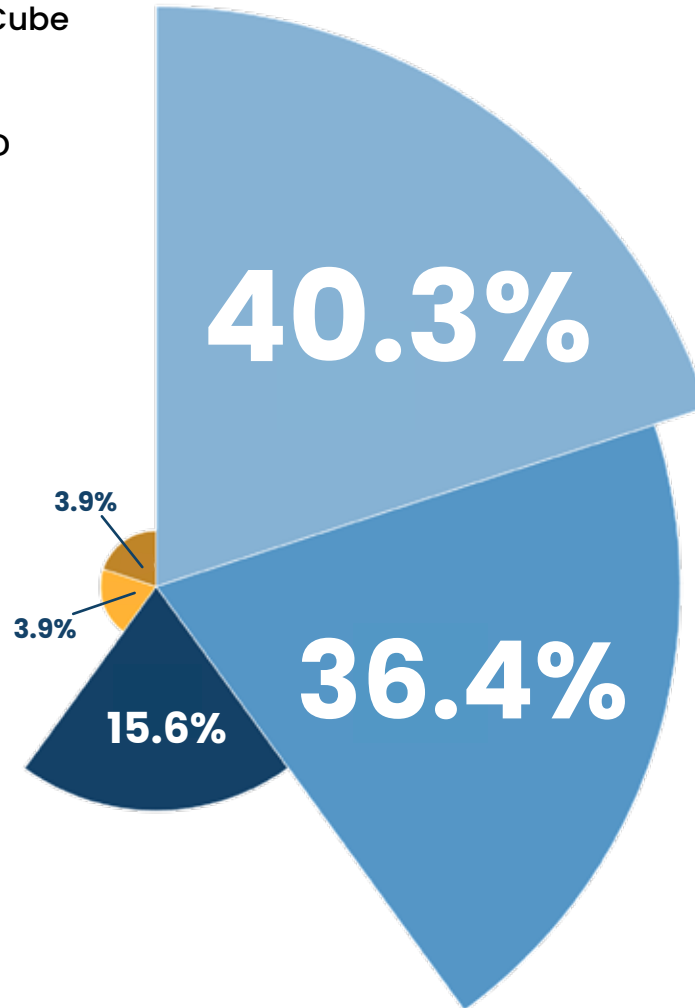
- La Sportiva Olympus Mons Cube
- Scarpa Phantom 8000 HD
- Double Boot with Overboot
- Lowa Expedition 8000 Evo RD
- La Sportiva Spantik

Design Principles

Used on Denali, Everest, Antarctica, and in other extreme conditions, these boots have significantly more insulation and at least two layers of boot. These will almost always have a built-in gaiter for added warmth, and often utilize Boa tightening systems that are easier to use with bulky gloves than traditional lacing.



La Sportiva Olympus Mons Cube



Double Boot with Overboot



Lowa Expedition 8000 Evo RD

3 Things to Look for in Expedition Boots:

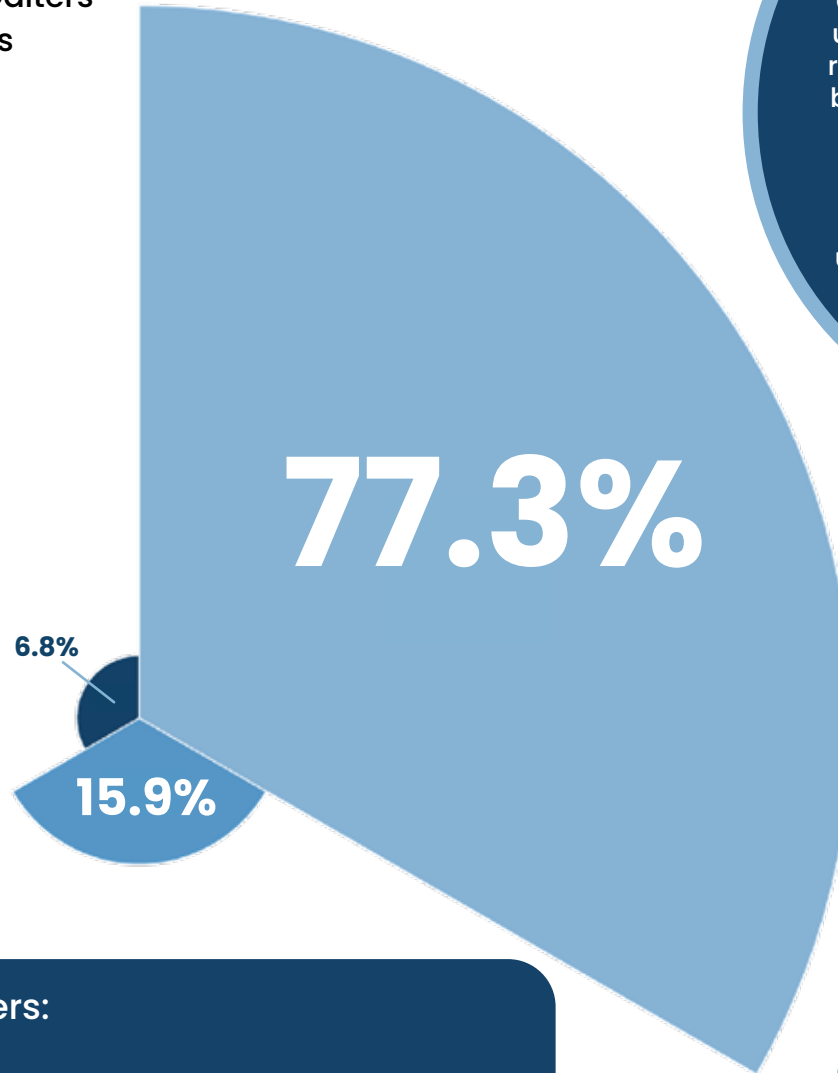
- Super-insulated - at least two layers of the boot
- Integrated Gator and waterproof construction
- Aggressive tread and crampon compatibility

Footwear | Gaiters

- Outdoor Research Expedition Crocodile Gaiters
- Outdoor Research Helium Gaiters
- Black Diamond Apex Gaiters



Outdoor Research Expedition Crocodile Gaiters



Design Principles

Gaiters come in handy when you're up high. Not only do they stop snow, rocks, and scree from getting in your boots, but they also keep everything below the knee tight and streamlined to avoid accidental crampon snags. Your gaiters should have simple adjustments for tightening under the boot and around the calf. For most mountaineering, knee-length gaiters will be just fine.



Outdoor Research Helium Gaiters



Black Diamond Apex Gaiters

3 Things to Look for in Gaiters:

- Waterproof material
- Durable fabric on the inside cuff to prevent crampon damage
- Fitted/narrow profile

RMI Guides Top Picks



Approach Shoes

La Sportiva TX4

"The tx4s are just awesome. They're super grippy and durable and are one of the most versatile shoes I've ever owned. Mine have accompanied me up snowy peaks in the cascades, on long trail runs in the low lands and up el cap in Yosemite national park!"

- **Thomas Skoog**

Multiple Cascades Summit & Ski Descents



Single Boots

La Sportiva Nepal Cube GTX

"A workhorse of boot that will hold up to many years of mountain abuse."

- **Seth Burns**

3 Denali, 35+ Rainier Summits



Double Boots

Scarpa Phantom 6000 HD

"These boots felt comfy right out of the box and just got better with time. They're warm when I need them to be and dry out well on expeditions. Simple and effective, which is important when you're up at altitude."

- **Dominic Cifelli**

50+ Rainier Summits.



Expedition Boots

La Sportiva Olympus Mons Cube

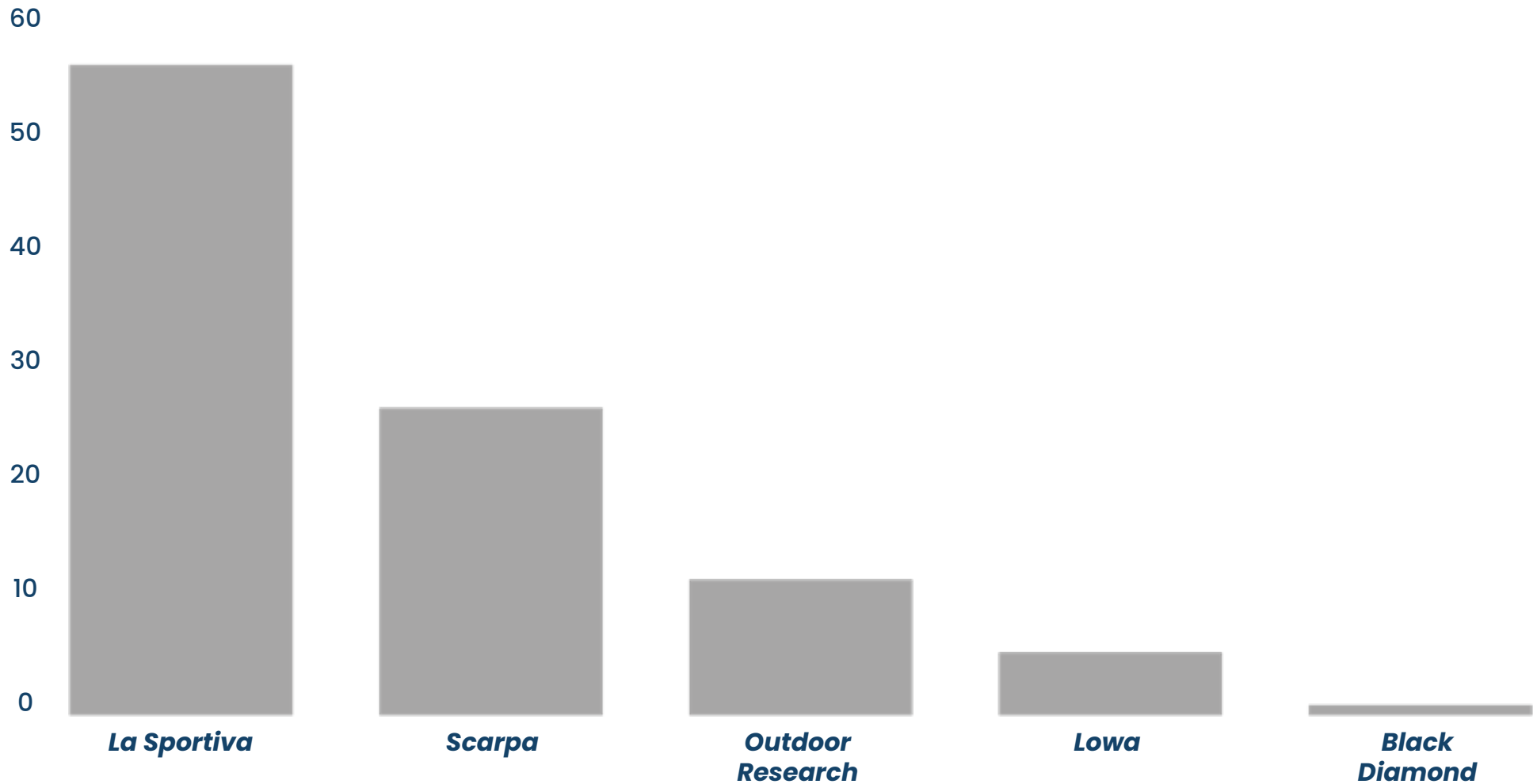
"La Sportiva Olympus Mons - This is the classic Antarctica and 8000 meter boot. Super warm, and incredibly comfortable for long days on big mountains."

- **Josh McDowell**

2 Everest, 8 Aconcagua Expeditions



Top **Footwear** Brands



Closing Thoughts

Ok, that was a ton of info, but we hope our Guide Pick results gave you at least a bit of valuable information when choosing your next piece of mountaineering gear. We use Guide Pick to ensure our climbers are in the best gear possible, but it can also be used as a tool to help other brands capture market share and improve products.

Whether you're a consumer, manufacturer, or just a fan of what we do here at Whittaker Mountaineering, we'd love to hear your thoughts and feedback! Don't hesitate to reach out to us using the info below, and happy climbing!



Questions or Comments?

email | info@whittakermountaineering.com
website | whittakermountaineering.com
phone | 360-569-2142

