

AT Boots 2007

Contributed by Jeff Burke & Lance Riek
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For the record, pro patroller Jeff Burke stands 5'11" and weighs in at 165 pounds and prefers powerful boots and skis for both his work and ski mountaineering play. He'll take a boot with noticeably more ski control over slight differences in skinning comfort.

Alpine Touring

Boots 2007

Lance Riek is 5'8" and weighs 140 pounds. Like Jeff, Lance is a gear-geek always willing to squander time rehashing the minutia of AT boots. For both touring and turning, Lance leans towards the lighter end, willing to sacrifice some performance to save weight. For him, greater touring ease far outweighs any negligible difference in stiffness.

Crispi

Freeride

weight: 8lbs. 1oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 23.5–30

Buy Now From:

Crispi: This four-buckle (plus power strap) boot is designed for skiers wanting alpine precision and power with touring weight and ease. An integrated carbon stirrup, extending above the ankle, provides tremendous response. The cuff spoiler enhances this power. Three forward lean positions, cant adjustment and thermo-liner customize the fit and feel.

Lance: As its design intends, this boot cranks skis well, irrespective of conditions—no surprise there. But, I was surprised by how comfortably it tours. Its eight-pound mass isn't unreasonable, and the range of ankle motion and walking ease is better than I expected.

Jeff: I agree that the Freeride is comfortable, but the forward flex is soft for its class. Some people, myself included, simply feel naked without that fourth buckle. However, if a softer four-buckle boot fits your style of skiing then this could very well be the one for you.

Crispi

Diablo

weight: 7lbs. 6oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 23.5–30

Crispi: The Diablo utilizes the same carbon reinforcements as the Freeride, but offers more tourability. Three micro-adjustable buckles, power strap, thermo liner and three-position cuff-lock make this boot easy to customize and adjust in the field—a great combination of both touring and skiing performance. Also available in a women's last.

Jeff: I found that the Diablo was quite comfortable, but it didn't flex like any AT boot I've ever known. It took some warming up to. With a conservative, low-cut cuff, simple walk/ski mode and low profile, it will work best for touring. For me, the boot would be much more alluring if it were Dynafit-compatible.

Lance: I liked the feel of the Diablo, both when climbing and cranking. Tele skiers who like the fit and feel of Crispi who are pondering the dark side should feel right at home in the Diablo. Until they absent-mindedly try to drop a knee. I'd place the Diablo in the middle range of the three-bucklers.

Dynafit

Freeride Aero

weight: 8lbs. 5oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 23–30

Buy Now From:

Dynafit: The Freeride is the most powerful Dynafit-compatible boot available. With a wrap-around cuff and a stiff toe box secured by four buckles plus power strap, this boot delivers downhill-focused performance with Dynafit inserts for monster descents or hard charging at the resort. Dynafit's new Quick Step-In fittings ease clicking into the binding by guiding the toe holes to the binding pins. Also available: the Ski Touring Aero (\$630 7lbs. 15oz./pair (27.5)) for the skier who wants the features of the Freeride, but in a lighter, less aggressive package.

Lance: Tall, stiff and amply buckled—this isn't your grandpa's Dynafit. The Freeride stands shoulder to shoulder with all the non-alpine four-bucklers. The Quick Step-In inserts are slick. I've skied Dynafits for many years and have dialed the binding engagement, but the new step-ins added noticeable convenience and speed. The Freeride is a welcome addition to the Dynafit line, but with slightly more weight for its class. Based on my preferences, I'd go with the Ski Touring Aero, which I felt performed similarly, while dropping about a half pound of weight.

Dynafit

TLT 4 Race

weight: 5lbs. 4oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 23–30

Buy Now From:

Dynafit: Stripped down to bare necessities, the TLT 4 Race is the lightest AT boot available. To shave grams further, the center of the sole is removable. With one buckle atop the foot, this boot is comfortable for hiking and skinning. A thick power strap engages plugs from the lower shell into holes in the cuff, locking the boot into ski mode.

Jeff: I've never been interested in the booties of the supersaver weight-class. But, I'm about to eat my words. I couldn't believe how well these little things skied. Dynafit has the ankle-system dialed on this. The cuff and Velcro strap hug and hold everything in place, much to my surprise. It can definitely push around a short mid-fat ski in powder, and I consider the Race ideal for rally racing.

Lance: Jeff is right: don't underestimate the ski-turning capability of this boot based on its weight or its race design. At nearly a pound lighter than the next lightest boot, it has an amazingly high power-to-weight ratio. The novel design of the cuff lock is the source of that power. For long, multi-day tours, with peak descents sprinkled in, this boot is ideal. If weight matters to you, take a serious look at this boot.

Garmont

Adrenalin

weight: 8lbs. 5oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 25–30.5

Buy Now From:

Garmont: The Adrenalin offers true alpine downhill performance with ski mountaineering mobility. It was developed for patrollers, heli-skiers, guides, extreme skiers who don't want ski mountaineering boots, and alpine skiers who hike the resort. The AT sole mates with all AT DIN bindings. The alpine sole fits all alpine step-in bindings, as well as AT bindings compatible with the alpine ISO norm.

Lance: The Adrenalin is the most boot in the review, I'd say. The boot walks well without skis due to the rock sole, has good cuff motion when striding with skins, and comes at a reasonable weight. For these reasons, I plain like

this boot more than I would expect, given that I'm a "Light is Right" kind of guy. I rarely need this level of performance, but I still find myself wanting a pair for the boot quiver.

Jeff: The Adrenalin is an ideal boot for skiing both in and out of bounds on an equal basis. It's strong enough to push hard around resorts (although it's still no match for full-bore alpine boots). And, it will head out-of-bounds confidently when matched with a set of big boards. While it's not the best for long tours, the Adrenalin is the obvious choice if you want to ski anything with one pair of boots.

Garmont

Mega Lite

weight: 6lbs. 8oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 23–30.5

Garmont: The featherweight Mega Lite is designed for weight-conscious ski mountaineers, hut tourers and rally racers. With its lightweight mobility, it's perfect for tours requiring lots of hiking and cramponing. However, its design doesn't sacrifice downhill performance.

Jeff: This isn't the boot I'd want for rally racing, but rather for long tours and scrambling around the mountains with skis on my back. The three-buckle boot is Dynafit-compatible and still relatively strong despite being so light. Any ski mountaineer could dial in this boot and spend long days climbing and skiing moderate terrain in style.

Lance: If you're a gram-counting racer, the Mega Lite is a bit rotund compared to the F1 and TLT Race. However, if you want a full-featured, lightweight boot for all-around backcountry skiing, the Mega might be a better choice over the bellowsed F1 and the minimalist Race. During testing, I tended to forget it was there—it became invisible without any nagging deficits, as good gear should.

Lowa

Rodeo

weight: 7lbs. 14oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 25.5–32

Lowa: The powerful four-buckle Rodeo is designed to handle the demands of high-adventure skiers who need the buckle for stability and steering control, but also the lighter shell and thermo liner for climbing and skinning uphill.

Lance: Lowa thoughtfully positioned the Rodeo in terms of power and weight between the alpine-styled AT boots and milder four-bucklers. If you're attracted to Lowa's fit, feel and engineering, it's a good choice to drive any ski. The boot features a clean design in its easy-to-operate cuff lock and reversed lower buckles—everything you need, nothing extra. The tongue is a tad stiff for long tours, I felt.

Jeff: Though it doesn't appeal to my sense of fashion-style, the Rodeo's solid performance transcends those looks. I spent an entire day practicing crevasse rescue and marching around in sloppy snow in complete comfort. The boots cinch down around my ankles just right, allowing for great control without stopping blood flow to my toes. The flex is sturdy, and I personally didn't find the tongue too stiff for slogging. Go figure.

Lowa Pro

weight: 9lbs. 2oz./pair (27.5)

sizes: 25.5–32

Lowa: The four-buckle Pro, with its traditional liner, is aimed at race coaches, patrollers or any skier who goes for vertical on alpine terrain. These skiers want both super control offered by four buckles and the fit offered by a traditional lasted liner. Because they are riding lifts, skiers will find the little additional weight insignificant.

Lance: The Pro is less stiff and much heavier than the Rodeo, so it's designed for a different type of skier. Personally, I'd go for the Rodeo. But if you're a pro who spends all day, every day, in your boots, and you prefer a softer flex and traditional liner, the Pro would go to work with you and do its job well.

Jeff: Lowa makes a comfortable four-buckler that is perfect for ski patrollers, race crews and coaches. It's a boot that can be worn all day, while offering substantial stability and support. Since AT boots are already comparably softer than alpine boots, I'd still want the lightest boot that offers the most support, and pick the Rodeo.

Scarpa

Tornado

weight: 8lbs. 6oz./pair (27)

sizes: 23.5–31

Scarpa: As the lines between alpine and backcountry blur, Scarpa presents the Tornado, a performance alpine freeride boot. The Tornado includes interchangeable tongues—a softer ski-walk tongue and a stiffer fall-line tongue—and interchangeable lugged rubber or DIN alpine soles. Increased adjustable forward cuff pressure, canting and custom fit emphasize the ride down, but the Tornado allows the alpine freeride skier the comfort, weight savings and versatility normally reserved for ski mountaineering boots.

Lance: The Tornado is a big boot with a cuff that's noticeably taller than the four-buckle, AT-only boots. The wide around cuff and wrap-plates of the lower buckles enable a snug fit without buckle pressure points. The articulated ski-walk tongue and the wide range of cuff movement make for pleasant, daylong skinning. The walking sole could include more rocker and width at the forefoot for more natural walking. Overall, a surprisingly comfortable boot that drives any ski in bounds or out.

Jeff: The Tornado is the arch nemesis of the Adrenalin. The bottom line is that it'll perform at the same level as the Adrenalin and provide the same setbacks: heavy, little rocker and not really great for long tours. But if you're an in-and-out resort skier riding big boards, try on both of these boots and pick the one that best fits your foot. Either will deliver.

Scarpa

Denali

weight: 7lbs. 10oz./pair (27)

sizes: 23.5–31

Scarpa: The Denali TT remains a ski mountaineering stalwart, accurately matching aggressive skiing with long approaches. With many refinements over the years, it positions itself as the designated driver. Give it the keys, and it will get you home after getting vertically pounded. It's suitable for the skier pushing big boards on steep terrain who wants Tornado-like performance, while keeping the realities of ground transport in mind.

Lance: With its easy-hinging tour-mode cuff, the Denali tours more comfortably than most four-bucklers. And, given its lightweight for its class, the Denali is a good choice for bigger days with bigger skis. Secure the buckles, cuff lock and power strap to turn those skis with ease.

Jeff: The Denali was my favorite of the review—it's just too bad they aren't Dynafit compatible. Scapadial is dialed in the walk mode. This boot is such a workhorse without being heavy and swampy in the toe-box. The adjustable forward lean tunes the boot to your style. It can drive just about any ski out there.

Scarpa

Matrix

weight: 7lbs. 1oz./pair (27)

sizes: 23.5–32

Scarpa: The Matrix is Scarpa's lightest, Dynafit-compatible, full-featured AT boot—updated with both Pebax P/U to stiffen ski mode. This boot pleases skiers who measure their ski days in calories, ounces and miles rather than vertical alone. The broad cuff range and easy adjustments make the turns worth the daylong skin. A good choice for the crossover tele skier looking to stay light and gain performance, and some women prefer it to the gender-specific Magic.

Jeff: Quite a step up from the Laser, the Matrix is quickly becoming my ideal boot. Dynafit-compatible, light and comfortable with thermo-liners and a new cuff, it is twice the boot the Laser ever was, and its ability to drive a bigger ski makes it much more appealing.

Lance: With its vast range of cuff motion and powerful wrap-around cuff, the Matrix reaches across a wider span of touring-comfort/turning-power scale than most boots. This season, they've stiffened the plastic in the lower boot to boost the power a bit more. Simply put, the Matrix is one boot that won't feel out of place, no matter how your backcountry outing unfolds.

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