Woman's Ski Test 2007

Contributed by Administrator
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In 2003, we reviewed 35 skis—only one was women's-specific. This year we tested nearly 80 tele and AT dedicated skis, with 11 designed for women.

Throw out pipe and park skis (hey, we are Backcountry) and include only first and second-year offerings (for older skis still in the manufacturer's line, see our archived reviews on-line), and we get what you see here—40 tele and AT skis, another 10 specifically designed for women.

The stage for this year's test was Jay Peak, Vermont's northernmost ski area. We assembled an incredibly diverse group of skiers who meant to exploit all aspects of each ski and provide the most objective and well rounded reviews possible. We mounted the telemark skis with Rottefella Cobra R8s, a perfect test binding with its removable heel throw. On the AT skis, we chose Silvretta's Pure. Dig in. - Mike Horn

BY LINDSAY YAW

KARHU Jil

sizes [cm]: 158, 165, 172 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 124/90/113 weight/pair [g]: 2990 (165cm)

The Jil is back. As the top-sheet—imbedded with antique photos of 1952 Olympics medalist Andrea Mead Lawrence—suggests, the Jil is for the expert skier, who loves to charge. With a girth that wins the widest-underfoot category, this ski likes to be taken into the wild after the deepest stashes of powder and crud. A favorite for one tester: “The Jil is lively in the bumps, floats in the powder and carves like a dream.” With an even flex to stabilize chatter at speed, the Jil has a snappy energy for lightning-fast turn transitions. It seemed to attract bigger, more aggressive testers, looking for a ski they could strong arm. The Jil’s stiffer tip deflects crud well for easy trail breaking or corn cruising.

K2 Dawn Patrol

sizes [cm]: 153, 160, 167, 174 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 125/89/112 weight/pair [g]: 3350 (167cm)

When putting in an early morning skin track—sleepwalking into the backcountry—and you want a smooth ride dowr a.m. adventure, look to the Dawn Patrol. With a soft, supple flex that has a feather-light touch in deep snow and crud, our testers felt this ski’s potential lies in pleasing the most powder-powered women. The forgiving shovel makes transitions sweetly and a wide waist gives flotation on soft surfaces. Wide doesn’t translate to smooth on hardpack, however, and makes faster turns chatter.

Buy Now From:

G3 Siren

sizes [cm]: 157, 166 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 121/88/109 weight/pair [g]: 3300 (166cm)

Homer’s Odysseus had to shove wax in his ears so as not to be lured in by the Siren’s song&#x2026 that is so last eon. Now with the introduction of G3’s Siren, you can indulge your pleasures with this all-day, all-mountain ripper. Our testers found the combination of a rich, calming dampness in fast, long radius turns and a spicy snap for zipping in and out of shorter turns. “The even flex with a little extra in the tail lets the ski flow super smoothly,” said one tester. “The Siren pops back to you in the bumps, and remains predictable in tighter swaths of trees.” Another commented, “This ski is lively and responsive enough to dance a two-step if you need it to.”

Buy Now From:

BLACK DIAMOND Lyric

sizes [cm]: 163, 173 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 118/88/110 weight/pair [g]: 3175 (173cm)

The Lyric is the brute sister to BD’s Havoc. With their proprietary Dual-Torsion bow construction, this ski is m for bombing through stiff crud and maching down big, wide-open slopes. But the speed needs to be part of the equation for these gals to sing. Twin tips aid in sketching out of tight spots, while the light weight makes for less tiresome touring and a softer tail makes for silky turn transitions. Take heed: the Lyrics can plow you down if you’ve got a light touch or prefer a quick, short turning ski. One tester noted, “Once the ski is at high speeds, transitions are seamless, but lightweight ladies will be challenged moving the skis into new turns.”

Buy Now From:

ROSSIGNOL Rip Chick

sizes [cm]: 150, 160, 168, 176 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 120/83/110 weight/pair [g]: 3160 (168cm)

Packing more beef than her little sister, the Rip Chick will stand up to big drivers with a heavy foot, who won’ accept chatter on hardpack. A first effort for Rossignol in the women’s AT/tele market, the Rip Chick is a bit tanky for touring further than your resort’s O.B. gates. One tester said, “This is a nimble and playful ski that loves to turn and is also fun in variable terrain.” The stout tail can catapult even quad-strong skiers into the backseat in bumps and shorter turns if they’re not paying attention, but also provides meaty stability in powerful turn transitions and hard-snow railing.

Buy Now From:

KARHU Betty

sizes [cm]: 156, 166, 176 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 117/80/105 weight/pair [g]: 2930 (166cm)

The Betty’s poplar core keeps the skis light underfoot for rocking short, lively turns, and maintains torsional r for ripping in and out of mogul fields. These skis can move from edge to edge without transition hiccups, and can check speed if you get in a jam. There’s only one problem: we found no evidence suggesting you can trust that the ski to support deep, monster arcs on firmer terrain. “A ski for someone who likes a soft, supple ski and who primarily skis trees and backcountry,” said one tester.

K2 Schi Devil

sizes [cm]: 153, 160, 167, 174 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 119/78/105 weight/pair [g]: 3000 (167cm)

The Schi Devils are playful, light skis that dance in bumps and short radius turns. “It’s a very responsi where the slightest movement gets the ski on and off edge,” described one tester. “Characteristically soft flexing,” said another. “Although not so noodley as the She’s Piste. It’s a higher performance ski for a more aggressive skier.” So for those that love K2, but want to step up from the entry level She’s Piste (still in the line after launching the women’s tele market in 2003), the Devil is one hell of an option. Testers noted that it is stouter overall than the She’s Piste, and that while this ski’s soft tip makes for easy turn transition, the devilishly stiff tail can jettison you out of the turn if you’re not centered on the ski.

Buy Now From:

ROSSIGNOL Hip Chick

sizes [cm]: 148, 158, 166, 174 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 110/78/105 weight/pair [g]: 3100 (156cm)

Hailing the most consistent praise of all the skis we tested, the Hip Chick—a play off Rossi’s old rooster mas unrelenting arcs in fresh corduroy and responds gracefully to quad power. The Hip Chick’s sidecut gives the ski a subtle snap to get in and out of turns without brute force, yet it’s damp camber plowed mercilessly through crud. “You can play in the bumps and trees easily, and they don’t feel short when making high-speed turns,” said one tester. “That snappy energy can also make longer radius turns feel jumpy if you’re not on top of the ski.”

Buy Now From:

KARHU Alice

sizes [cm]: 156, 166 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 112/75/101 weight/pair [g]: 2890 (166cm)

In this case, you can’t get anything you want from Alice’s restaurant. But for most intermediate testers Alice served up a helping of all-around goods. It’s lightweight and supple, and the narrower waist feeds at a speed suitable for those looking for predictability and control. “This ski offers excellent performance in soft snow and trees,” said one tester. Not for those wanting a burlesque pair of sticks on their feet, the Alice will chatter like mad above its speed limit and falters from positive edge grip on hard snow. But for those who primarily find their turns away from the piste, it’s a great option.

ATOMIC Saipal

sizes [cm]: 140, 150, 160, 170, 180 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 106/72/97 weight/pair [g]: 2990 (184 cm)

Why name a skinny carving ski after a 7,040m peak in Nepal? Our guess after the test: the amount of energy needed get up the peak is relative to the energy in controlling these feisty skis. Another women’s-specific ski to grace Atomic’s telemark line (after last season’s Femme Fatale), the Saipal is a weight-conscious touring ski that likes to carve as well on lift-served terrain. The ski’s lively pop, in and out of the transitions, sent our testers for a wild ride. “It will lead you right into a turn and just as quickly lead you across the fall line,” explained one tester.

Buy Now From:

K2 She’s Piste

sizes [cm]: 153, 160, 167, 174 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 112/70/97 weight/pair [g]: 2670 (167cm)

She’s Piste? Not any more. Totally redesigned, the ski that started the women’s tele movement diete returns with enhancements at the tip and waist, and new cosmetics. Testers in ‘03 and ‘04 were largely

mixed on the original 107/68/97 She, but this year it was more like “the perfect all-mountain ski. Able to go fast and furious but then slow down and enjoy tree skiing,” said one tester not fond of the original. Said another, “Great all-around ski. Very smooth—almost effortless. Does not require much brain power or time to figure out this ski.” Reviews were less glowing for powder propensity where K2 fans said they’d choose the Dawn Patrol.

Buy Now From:

Without Whom...

The Testers:

- Hardy Avery
- Lindsay Bilodeau
- Oliver Blackman
- Ben Bridgewater
- Wendy Bridgewater
- Erin Bushey
- Stephanie Campbell
- Mike Cannon
- Maria Daley
- Stephen Gorman
- Jason Haddick
- Emily Johnson
- Matt Mancini
- Ryland Mauck-Duff

- Andrew Minier
- Alan Moats
- Brian Mohr
- Eli Moore
- Sam Petri
- Adina Roskies
- Mickey Stone
- Lauren Traister
- Kirsten Waskuch

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Special thanks go to our local Tele guru Matt Mancini of Race Stock Sports for countless hours drilling and screwing.

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