

## Mountaineering Boots



**\*Hiking /Trekking**



**Single**



**Double Plastic**



**Double Hybrid**

### What should you consider when selecting a boot?

#### Region

- Research whether you will be primarily climbing on snow, ice, rock, or mixed ground. Choose boots that are durable for these activities.
- Research the amount of approach hiking required on trails or durable surfaces.
- Research the altitude that you will be at, including expected weather conditions such as temperature, precipitation, winds, deep snow, and time of year.

#### Support

- Consider the amount of weight you will need to carry every day. More weight usually means a heavier-weight-boot with more support.
- Consider ankle support and arch support. Select a style of socks (heavy weight vs. medium weight) to prevent your feet from sweating.

#### Personal Preference

- Choose the boot and manufacturer which fits you best. Do not choose a boot based on cost, color, or style. Ensure there is enough room for your toes and heel lift.
- Any style of boot can give you blisters or shin bang. We recommend always bringing moleskin, band-aids, and duct tape in case you experience this.
- Make sure you break your boots in before your trip. Wear them on local trails to see how your toes and heels feel on uphill and downhill slopes.
- For specialized boot fitting in Seattle, we recommend you visit the experts at Jim Mates at [Custom Boot Service](#).

We ask that you please take the time to invest in the right type of boot for your trip. If you bring the wrong style of boot, you may not be able to participate in the climb. You also do not want to jeopardize your teammate's success.

*\* Please Note: Hiking or trekking boots are not allowed on any Northwest Alpine Guides trips.*

## Single - Mountaineering Boots

Leather, synthetic, or hybrid single mountaineering boots have various styles. These range from heavyweight boots for better warmth, water resistance, and higher altitudes, as well as lightweight boots for warmer, dryer, summer-like conditions. These styles range from a fully-rigid sole to a more flexible sole and have varying degrees of ankle support.

**Pros:** Leather, synthetic, or hybrid boots are usually lighter, more comfortable to walk in various terrain conditions, and can be a less expensive option for mid-summer climbing. They perform better on certain types of terrain, like mixed snow and ice conditions, alpine rock, or ice climbing. Hybrid mountaineering boots are usually warmer and offer better protection against harsh weather conditions.

**Cons:** Leather, synthetic, or hybrid boots can become cold at higher altitudes, during high winds, or in wet conditions. Once wet, they usually take longer to dry. High-quality versions of these boots will be your most expensive boot options. Lighter weight, flexible shank boots can have more problems with crampons falling off or not fitting properly.

### Single - heavyweight leather, synthetic, or hybrid:

- Mount Rainier (mid-summer, dry conditions)
- Mount Baker (mid-summer, dry conditions)
- Northwest peaks over 10,000 ft. when weather is expected to be warm and dry.

### Recommended Heavyweight Single Boots:

- [La Sportiva Nepal Evo GTX](#)
- [La Sportiva Nepal Cube GTX](#)
- [Scarpa Phantom Tech](#)
- [Scarpa Mont Blanc Pro GTX](#)



*La Sportiva Nepal Cube GTX*

### Single - lightweight synthetic boots:

- Mount Shuksan
- Eldorado Peak
- Sahale Peak
- Peaks under 10,000 ft. (mid-summer season)

### Recommended Lightweight Single Boots:

- [La Sportiva Trango Ice Cube GTX](#)
- [La Sportiva Trango Cube](#)
- [Scarpa Charmoz](#)



*Scarpa Charmoz*

## Plastic - Double Mountaineering Boots

These boots are made up of an exterior hard plastic shell and an interior soft bootie with a fully-rigid sole and good ankle support.

**Pros:** Plastic boots are usually warmer, more water-resistant, and can be better for kick-stepping in various snow conditions because of their rigid construction. They will keep your feet dryer than most other styles. These boots can be less expensive compared to higher-end synthetic models, and usually work well with most styles of crampons because of their full shank rigid sole, rear welt, and front toe welt.

**Cons:** Plastic double boots can be less comfortable and agile walking off of snow, whether on trails or mixed terrain. They also tend to be heavier than a hybrid counterpart.

### Ideal for:

Mount Rainier (year-round)

Mount Baker (early and late summer season, winter)

Northwest peaks over 10,000 ft. when weather is expected to be wet and cold.

Extended mountaineering courses

### Recommended plastic double boots:

[Koflach Arctis Expe](#)

[Koflach Degre](#)

[Scarpa Inverno](#)



*Koflach Arctis Expe*



*Scarpa Inverno*



*Koflach Degre*

## Hybrid - Synthetic Double Mountaineering Boots

Highly insulated, high-quality hybrid synthetic double mountaineering boots are the most durable type of footwear you can purchase for domestic and international climbs. These types of boots are tough and share many of the qualities associated with plastic double boots without the added weight.

**Pros:** High altitude hybrid mountaineering boots are typically made of Gore-Tex, or alternate synthetic material to block wind and precipitation from reaching your feet. Additional insulation in the inner boot allows for maximum warmth and protection in colder environments. They are constructed with full ankle support, a full shank, rigid sole, and usually have a front toe welt and rear welt. These boots also consist of an inner liner, which can be removed for drying.

**Cons:** They can be bulky and less agile walking on and off snow, whether on snow slopes, trails or mixed terrain. They can be very warm at low altitudes increasing foot perspiration.

### Ideal for:

Mount Rainier (early and late season, winter).

Mount Baker (early and late season, winter).

Northwest peaks over 10,000 ft. when weather is expected to be wet and cold.

Extended mountaineering courses (4 or more days)

### Recommended hybrid double boots:

[La Sportiva Spantik](#)

[La Sportiva Baruntse](#)

[Scarpa Phantom 6000](#)



*La Sportiva Spantik*



*La Sportiva Baruntse*



*Scarpa Phantom 6000*

## Foot Care

### Socks

Selecting comfortable socks can be almost as important as your shoe choice. Some people prefer thicker socks to reduce friction or wool socks for added warmth. Experiment at home with different types of socks to see which fit you, and your boot, best. Socks must be wool or synthetic, as cotton is not acceptable.

### Too tight in the boot

Some retail stores will recommend you wear liner socks, though in our experience, many people do not necessarily benefit from these. In fact, sometimes liner socks can produce blistering just as quickly as using a single-weight sock. Others may prefer to use inserts for arch or foot support.

Whichever is your preference, always remember to pack enough socks before leaving on a trip. You can get away with re-wearing the same shirts, pants, and even underwear for days in a row, but keeping clean socks available is the key to preventing damage to your feet.

### Blisters

Friction and moisture are two of the main causes of blisters. When you wear inappropriately heavyweight boots or socks on a trip, your feet may overheat and cause friction that results in a blister. If you do not check the weather before you leave on an expedition, precipitation could get trapped in your boots and your feet may become permanently dampened for the rest of the trip. Be sure to wear gaiters to avoid this problem!

If you feel a hot spot or a blister beginning to form, stop and fix it immediately. Use moleskin, band-aids, or duct tape to prevent the area from becoming more agitated. If your feet and socks are damp change into dry pair for sleeping. Wet socks can be placed inside the tent or sleeping bag to help dry them out.

### Boot Fitting

The correct fit is crucial to the overall comfort and performance of a boot. New boots should be worn exclusively indoors until you are satisfied with the fit. With your hiking socks on, perform the following tests to help confirm that your boots fit correctly. Because your feet swell during the day, these tests should be done in the evening hours.

With the boots fully unlaced, slide your foot all the way forward until you can feel your toes make contact with the front of the boot. In this position you should be able to comfortably slide your index finger down between the heel of your foot and the back lining of the boot. If there is room to fit two or more fingers behind your heel, the boot is too big. If force has to be applied to insert the finger, the boot is too small. In either case, the boots should be returned for an exchange of size.

If you have access to a ramp of some sort, stand in a downhill position with the boots fully laced. You should be able to wiggle your toes without jamming the front of the boot. Stand naturally and do not try to force your foot forward while performing this test.

## **Heel Lift**

It is not uncommon to experience some heel lift when boots are new. This is due to the fact that a flex point (crease) has not been established in the forward area of the boot. Once a flex point has been established, the heel of the boot will rise with the foot and heel lift should be eliminated. Heel lift should not exceed ¼ inch in new boots. If you experience excessive heel lift, return the boots for an exchange.

## **Break In**

There is no quick way to break in boots. Shortcuts such as using leather softeners, applying heat treatments and wetting boots to walk them dry, drastically reduce the life of your boots. The only recommended break in procedure is to wear the boots for short periods of time on flat terrain until they can be worn all day long. Once the boots can be worn all day you can venture into the mountains with them.

It is a good idea to carry moleskin during this break in period. If you feel any pain or hot spots while hiking, take off your boots and socks and apply a large sheet of moleskin around the affected area. This will prevent blisters from forming.

## Introduction to Crampons

Crampons are necessary on all summit climbs and mountaineering expeditions, as they are the only piece of equipment attaching your feet to the mountain. Crampons are needed on vertical ice walls or steep slopes, and are essential on glaciers, snowfields, etc.

We know what you are thinking - and no, they are not called “clamp on’s.” Crampon is a French word, first designed in 1908 in a 10-point style. More recently, two additional points (actually called “tines”) were added to the front of the device to aid front-point climbing. These are the crampons most commonly used today.

For most Northwest Alpine Guides climbs and courses we recommend 12-point steel mountaineering crampons. The crampons you select should also include an anti-snow balling plate and a safety strap. The strapping or attachment system is determined by the style of boots you select and the conditions you will climb in.

### Three primary styles:

1. Steel wire (toe bale) across the front of the crampon which fits into the boots front toe welt, with a rear-hinged buckle that snaps tightly onto the rear boot welt. These include an ankle safety strap.
2. Plastic basket (toe bale) in the front of the crampon which fits snugly over the boots front toe box. These include a rear-hinged buckle that snaps tightly onto the rear boot welt. These include a safety buckling strap.
3. Plastic basket (toe bale) in the front of the crampon which fits snugly over the boots front toe box, with a rear plastic basket (rear bale) which fits snugly behind the boots heel. These also include a safety buckling strap.



Steel wire toe bale



Plastic toe bale



*Plastic toe and heel bale*

Our favorite crampon brands and styles:

[Black Diamond Sabertooth](#)

[Petzl Vasak](#)

[Grivel G12](#)

## Boot Welt Types

There are a few considerations when buying crampons specific to your boots. Does your boot have a toe welt or not? Boots with toe welts can be used in conjunction with any crampon style. However, boots that **do not have a toe welt** will require use of plastic basket crampons.



Toe Welt



No Toe Welt

Do not hesitate to reach out to Northwest Alpine Guides with any questions on finding the right type of crampons or boots for you. Contact us at [info@mountaingurus.com](mailto:info@mountaingurus.com) with any questions.