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Ski Review

by Michael Becker, Jeremy Rooper, and David Waag

Here we go again, another year of drooling over new boards. In case you live in a cave, the word is fatter is better. There is some truth to the fat ski propaganda and yes they are loads of fun to ski. The big skis offer their widest appeal in soft snow but can be fun just about anywhere. We are a group of backcountry skiers and we approach the reviews from this perspective. All of the skis are capable at the resort too but the biggest ones require confidence and bigger boots for full appreciation at a ski area.

Remember, just a few years ago the 80-90mm waist skis made just fine powder skis. The experience is all relative. The bigger skis truly extend the range of snow we can call skiable and the deep wet days of the Cascades once reserved for snowboards are now fun for the whole family. Nonetheless, fat skis are not the endall; skis closer to 80 underfoot have their place in the quiver too. The rewards of 90+mm underfoot are debatable but like any addict, there is always a rational.

Less is more when touring and, although the review is heavy on 90+ waisted skis, several models are remarkably light. For us, this is the true innovation that is occurring; skis are getting fatter and lighter at the same time. Higher tech materials and construction are making for some excellent fat skis that remain reasonable for touring. But remember, just 'cause everyone in the movies is skiing big boards does not mean you have to also; we still see a strong place for the 75-85mm waist ski too.

We introduce the review with short paragraphs on each company's offerings. Each company has a certain feel to their line and we thought it helpful to attempt a summary of these personalities. Finally, we do not include every ski that is on the market. Many skis are missing - some of those are the same as last year's offerings and you can read about them on our website in last year's review. Others, we simply did not have the time and resources to test - read on.

Atomic skis all utilize synthetic Densolite cores and technology adapted from their Alpine line-up. The result is light responsive skis that are respected for their edge hold and neutral personalities. For 2007-08, Atomic introduces the RT86 and the RT80. The RT skis add a new lively dimension to the Atomic tele/AT line-up while several old favorites cap off the offering.

Black Diamond jumps into the ski world with both feet this year offering ten different models, seven of which are all new. All skis move to wood core construction this year and BD is not bashful about their skis catering to the mixed boundary crowd. Generally speaking these are stiffer skis that respond well to big boots, active tele bindings, or AT gear.

Dynafit, best known in North America for their AT binders, has a full ski line as well. Although we included only one ski here, Dynafit has a full run of touring minded skis with wood cores and alpine environs in mind.

G3 skis all use wood cores and modified cap construction. In general, the G3 boards are moderate in weight, offer firm but round flex, and have broad appeal. G3 expands the line with El Hombre, a true fat ski that measures in at 105 mm in the waist. Although G3 is well known for their tele bindings, their skis can go free or fixed.

K2 skis feature wood core construction and their time tested progressive sidecut. The tele line-up is a responsive group of skis,

Photo: Chad Coleman

relatively light in weight that ski mixed and soft conditions well. K2 tele skis are the only skis with binding inserts. The AT line-up grows this year with the addition of women's AT boards. On the men's side, the Mt Baker has been redesigned and they now offer a Baker Superlight for the gram counters.

Karhu skis can be characterized by their relatively lightweight and responsive ride. All skis have wood cores and the women's line adds the Bertha, a 100mm waisted ski. Showing their dedication to the backcountry market, Karhu offers their two widest men's skis in a lightweight touring friendly construction, featuring their new Greenlight Core technology.

Movement is new to the North American ski market. Created in Switzerland in 1999, they make a wood core ski with modified cap construction and bring a decidedly freeride flavor to their skis. We skied only a small sample of their line-up but overall they appeal to aggressive skiers. Big dimensions and healthy weights paired with twin-tips and firm flex gives the skis new school appeal.

Ski Trab, although lesser known in North America, has been making wood core skis in Europe since 1949. The Italian ski company is best known on this side of the Atlantic for mountaineering and randonee racing skis such as the Free Rando. We also review the Stelvio Freeride, which proves their ability to make an all mountain ski that appeals to the American market.

Voile pioneered soft snow skis with the Mountain Surf. The Surf has seen many years of service but this season marks the launch of a new ski from Voile, the Insane. The ski, made in house by Voile in Utah, features a wood core, cap design, and light-weight construction.

Fattest - 99mm+ waist



Atomic Janak Dimensions: 124-99-115 (173) Lengths: 153/163/173/183cm Weight: 3.91kg/8.6lbs (183cm) \$651 The Janak returns unchanged from last year (save for graphics). This is a soft snow tool. Sure, it is a fun board for high speed resort ripping in any snow but it really shines in deep snow. Although responsive enough to make a variety of turn shapes the Janak's minimal sidecut finds its groove riding out big radius turns. A favorite among fixed heelers for hedonistic powder consumption, the Janak also responds well to a big tele boot. If you are looking to go long as well as big and landing switch is part of your repertoire, take a look at the Janak Bro, a twin tip variation on the Janak that adds a mm or two to the tip and tail and is available in a 193cm.



Black Diamond Zealot Dimensions: 138-110-126 (182), Lengths: 182/192cm Weight: 4.2kg/9.24lbs (182cm) \$610 The name says it all; the Zealot is a big ski with a powerful personality. Given its mass and dimensions the Zealot, like any true fanatic, is capable of taking

you for a ride. Interestingly, for the bigger skier, the Zealot was more forgiving than the Verdict. Given the lengths available it is well matched to big boots and mechanized access or a true zealot. The ski comes to life at speed but still dictates big deliberate turns and is most at home in soft snow or going fast on any snow. It's a quiver ski for big skiers and big personalities.



Black Diamond Verdict Dimensions: 134-102-120 (180cm) Lengths: 170/180/190cm Weight: 4kg/8.8lbs (180cm) \$570 Although the name remains the same, the Verdict is more ski than it has ever been. While we voted last year's Verdict a relatively versatile touring ski given its dimensions, the new Verdict is bigger and more demanding. To use Matrix speak, we've seen the future and we need bigger guns. BD promotes their new line-up as skis that match the performance of alpine skis and the Verdict is not shy in living up to this. The result is a ski that responds when driven hard. We skied this one with fixed heels and were glad we did. Sure, it will appeal to aggressive freeheelers too but you will need the boots, bindings, and quads to match the Verdict's personality. Given its mass, it is a good choice for folks who do not count grams.

Nils Larsen, Karhu's Minister of Ski Culture, hosts a cabinet meeting during a week at Powder Creek, BC. Photo by Dave Waag.

WHERE WILL YOU SKI TODAY?

KARHU

"In the fog of a heavy snow, trees drift by like ghosts leading me down the fall-line. I love tree skiing, especially in storms like this one - cold and late in the season. I'm touring at Powder Creek Lodge, a tree skier's dream deep in the Purcell Range of British Columbia. We spend the day shredding steep lines through twisted larch and pencil-thin firs, over giant boulders and off sharp outcrops softened by three meters of snow. Each day we skin back to the cabin in fading light and falling snow, big flakes whispering "tomorrow," as they land."
-Nils Larsen

For more Karhu stories from the heart of winter and a look at the Mountain Series' new Greenlight™ Core, visit: WWW.KARHU.COM

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Ski Review

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has developed a following of skiers looking for an agile big board for aggressive skiing. We said it last year and we will say it again, these skis are more responsive than their paper specs might lead you to believe. Although we would recommend the BC 100 (same dimensions but lighter weight) for true touring use, the Team100 is a niche ski for powder; be it lift, cat or heli, or hiking, the Team 100 gives you all the performance you could hope for in a big board. Remarkably maneuverable for its healthy specs, the Team gets new graphics this year and loses a few grams. True to Karhu's personality, these skis maintain a reasonable flex.



Karhu BC100 Dimensions: 134-100-125 Lengths: 172/179/186cm Weight: 3.4kg 7.5lb (179cm) \$625 The BC100 takes Karhu's BC construction to the Team100 dimensions. The healthy 100mm waist is obviously designed with soft snows in mind. Less versatile than the BC90, the BC100 is one of the lightest skis in its class. Like the BC90, the round flex and damp ride give it a great predictable and capable personality. Do you need a touring ski with 100mm underfoot? Here in the NW it can be very handy for the "white rain" and rapidly changing inversion conditions. The BC 100 is a hoot in the pow, likes to charge around the resort in soft snow, yet its light weight keeps it responsive to last minute decisions, tight trees, and touring friendly boots.



K2 Anti Piste Dimensions: 135-102-121 Lengths: 167/174/181/188cm Weight: 3.75kg/8.2lb (174cm) \$579 The Anti Piste takes on subtle shape and dimension changes this season and we felt it to be a little stiffer also. Although the changes are subtle on paper, the differences from the original Anti Piste are significant. The ski still gives a nice full ski carve but its tip profile and running surface are changed creating a more versatile fat ski. K2 drew on design features that have evolved out of the Pontoon. The Anti-Piste, like so many skis pushing 100 underfoot, is most versatile when skied with bigger boots and at speed. We skied it with Targas but suspect it would respond well to more active binders too.



Movement Goliath Dimensions: 134 - 99 - 118 (184cm) Lengths: 184/191cm 4.36kg/9.6lb (184cm) \$795 The Goliath is, as its name implies, a powerful ski. These are alpine skis, as comfortable with the fully locked and loaded package as with an AT set up. Big boots improve performance as does speed. Don't be shy, you need to get some momentum to feel this ski's personality. Would we take it touring, unlikely. Is it fun to ski, you bet. Interestingly, despite the aggressive graphics and burly names, Movement is dedicated to using wood that is certified to be from a sustainable harvest source.




Voile Insane 138-103-128 (172cm), Length: 161/172/183cm, 3.1kg/6.75lbs (172cm) \$525 Voile steps in this year with an all new ski. The Insane is the lightest ski in its class. At 103 underfoot in a 172, the Insane is a touring tool. Carbon construction gives it good torsional stiffness and gives the ski confidence when the snow is less than ideal. Skiing the volcanoes in our 'hood often means a wide range of snow conditions in one day and the Insane was just as confident holding onto the firm upper snows as it was planing through the muck at lower elevations. Granted, carving a ski with 103mm underfoot takes a some getting used to but it stands up to the task. Most skis in this weight class are at least a full cm narrower if not more and its light swing-weight gives it the responsiveness of a narrower board. Skiing a fat board in the backcountry no longer has to mean dragging an anchor up the hill.


Fatter – 90-98mm waist




Black Diamond Kilowatt Dimensions: 126-95-114 (175cm) Lengths: 155/165/175/185cm Weight: 3.5kg/7.7lbs (175cm) \$540 Although BD touts this as a user friendly cruiser, we see it as a confident mixed condition ski that handles soft snow with ease but prefers big boots and active binders or a fixed heel to harness its full potential. Its overall stiffness speaks to strong skiers and provides solid edge control when needed. It is not as burly as the Verdict but offers more ski than the Havoc and caters to a longer radius ride. Although we found it less responsive than other skis in its width class, its solid platform underfoot is stable and solid through varied snows. We see it as a mixed snow and mixed boundary ski for experienced skiers.



G3 El Hombre Dimensions: 136-105-124 Lengths: 170/177/185/192cm Weight: 3.9kg 8.6lbs (177cm) \$775 This ski is for someone who understands that deep snow is not boot top and is looking for a board that will push them and can be pushed. The Hombre is a point and go ski; it has two speeds fast and faster. It performs well fixed or free heel and comes to life at speed, encouraging big arcs. It transitions well between snow conditions as it seems to ride over and through just about anything that comes its way. Consistent input yields consistent results with the Hombre. Although it is available in a 185 and 192, the 177cm length fits a wide range of skiers. You could tour on the Hombre, but your quads better be ready. If your 90+mm waisted ski has you wishing for more, the Hombre should be able to meet your needs and offer you room to grow.



Karhu Team 130 Dimensions: 155-130-148 Length: 186cm Weight: 5.14kg/11.3lb \$775 The 130 was created as per Karhu athlete request. As a "backcountry" publication, we debated the merits of including this ski in our review as, given its size, it is obviously a unique beast. Running surface is shortened through the use of tip profile and sidecut that gives the ski a relatively responsive ride given the dimensions, but the bottom line is it's not for the average ski tourer. The Team 130 is a big ski designed for big lines, big boots, and for most folks, mechanized access. Is it fun to ski, yes; is it practical, not really. If you fancy a trip to Valdez and are keen to alter your skiing experience, check 'em out.



Karhu Team 100 Dimensions: 134-100-125 Lengths: 172/179/186cm Weight: 3.97kg 8.7lb (179cm) \$625 The Team 100



G3 Reverend Dimensions: 126-93-114 Lengths: 170/177/185cm Weight: 4.1kg/8.2lbs (177cm) \$685 Once G3's flagship fatty, the Reverend now plays second to the new Hombre on paper. On snow, the Reverend continues to keep pace with other skis in its class. The Reverend prefers a strong driver and some testers found it on the less forgiving end of the spectrum. That said, the ski has an auto pilot mode and will cruise groomers in rest position if that is important to you. More importantly to us, the Reverend skis soft snow with ease, will bust out short radius turns when asked, and is always happy to be let off the leash and run. The round flex keeps the Reverend manageable while relatively generous side-cut keeps it lively. We skied it both free and fixed heel with the best feedback coming from the fixed heel testers. It is by no means the lightest ski in its class, but mounted with light teles or Dynafits, it makes a reasonable touring package. If you have been skiing 80-90 underfoot and are looking for a bigger ski that could become your mainstay board, the Reverend should make the short list.



G3 Rapid Transit Dimensions: 128-91-116, Lengths: 177/178/185/192cm Weight: 3.6kg/8lb (178cm) \$725 The Rapid Transit was somewhat of a sleeper in last years testing. We chalk this up to the fact that we skied with fixed heel binders. This year, we skied it freeheel and found the skis personality. This is a high energy, responsive tele rig. Given the skis dimensions, this energy requires some skill to harness, but given a few runs to dial it in, it carves and rides through varied snow conditions with enthusiasm. It is not a ski for everyone; we see it as a tele specific rig for folks who like to turn and carve. Given its asymmetrical shape, the ski initiates quickly and although its dimensions look like it would require a big boot, it performed well even in a pair of T3's and Targa bindings



Karhu Jak Dimensions: 124-90-113 Lengths: 165/172/179/186cm Weight: 3.86kg 8.5lb (179cm) \$575 One tester summed it up well – this is a desert island ski, if you were stranded and could only have one ski, the Jak can do it all; it is a jack-of-all-trades. Once pushing the limits of what backcountry skiers (at least us) would consider reasonable for ski dimensions, the Jak's 90mm waist is now commonplace. Sure, you can find a more responsive ski, you can also find a bigger ski but the Jak does embody much of what makes a ski a quiver of one. It is solid enough to take to the resort without a second thought and reasonable enough to take touring. It is very responsive and versatile for its class. We have always liked the Jak as a freeheel ski and have come to enjoy it with a fixed heel too. Our personal bias, however, says why buy the Jak if you can have the BC90? Well, the answer likely lies in your own bias. Ski more in the front country, go Jak, prefer to avoid mechanized access, go BC.



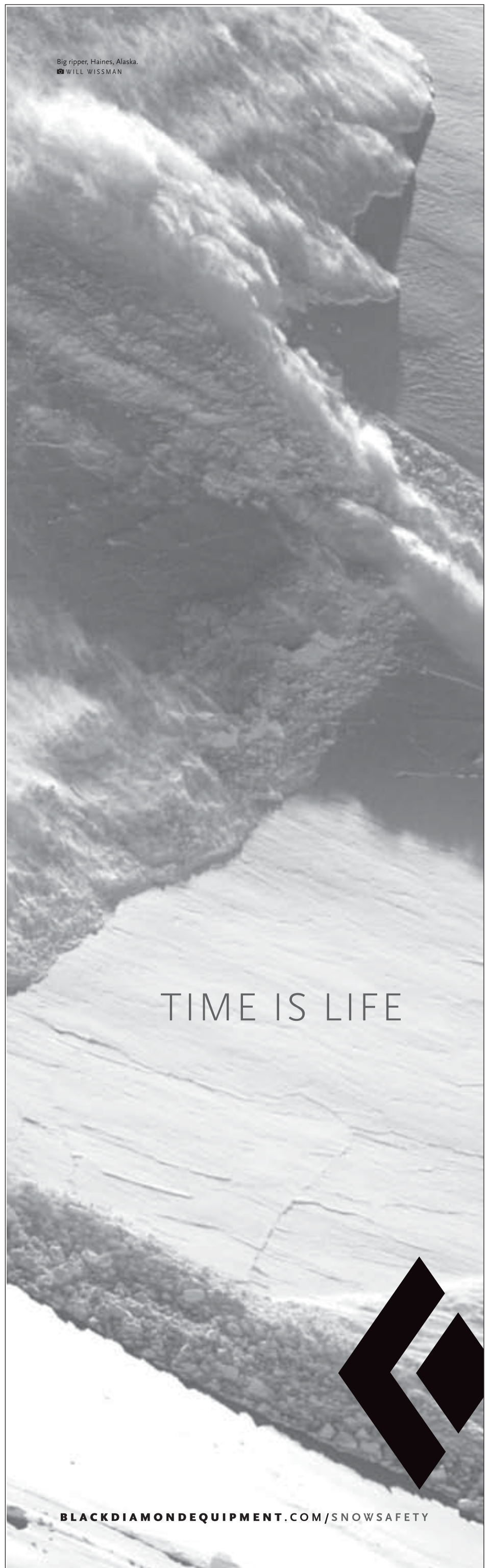
Karhu BC90 Dimensions: 124-90-113 Lengths: 165/172/179/186cm Weight: 3.23kg 7.1lb (179cm) \$575 Dimensionally, the BC90 is unchanged. Internally, the it gets Karhu's new Greenlight wood core, drops a few grams, and adds new graphics. The result is a light damp ski. In fact, skiing it run to run with the Jak evoked some thoughts that it was, despite its softer flex and lighter weight, more damp than the Jak and handled the varied snow of a powder day at the hill every bit as well as the Jak. If the resort is your primary focus (go get Skiing Magazine), most skiers should still stick with the Jak, but anyone who spends most of their days searching for and skiing soft snows needs to try this ski. Karhu has done a great job keeping the Jak platform a responsive versatile board. The BC90 is more than a Jak on a diet; it is its own ski and a favorite of ours for sure. It skis well tele and makes for a nice light AT touring package with Dynafit binders.

Fat – 81-89mm waist



Atomic Kailas Dimensions: 125-88-111 Length: 163/174/185cm. Weight: 3.36kg/7.4lbs (174cm) \$562 The Kailas is in its second season and continues to hold its own. Although it is similar under foot to the new RT86, the Kailas has a different personality from the RT. The Kailas is still responsive and likes to turn but it is less carvy and more round in its personality. Its straighter profile gives it a more traditional feel although its even flex gives it wide appeal. Although heavier than the RT86, the Kailas is still relatively light and a good choice for an all around touring ski. A solid board for the western based skier with medium to big boots looking to solve the

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Big ripper, Haines, Alaska.
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Ski Review **continued**

quiver dilemma. If forced to answer the fixed or free heel bias, we would say fixed.



Atomic RT86 Dimensions: 127-86-113 Lengths: 162/169/176/183cm. Weight: 2.95kg/6.5lbs (176cm) \$635 New from Atomic this season, the RT 86 is full of side-cut and damp feel. The side-cut gives the ski a responsive, easy turning personality and Atomic's Torsion Flex Control (TFC) technology from their alpine ski line gives it the smooth, damp ride. The combination makes for a ski that likes to turn and can handle just about any snow conditions. This is a light ski at six-and-a-half pounds (176cm) and this scores it high marks as a backcountry tool (although the plastic tip detail will be problematic for some skins). Given the weight, the RT86 skied well in a range of boots. We skied it free and fixed heel; it is tough to pick a bias. We see this as an all around quiver of one ski with a bias for folks who prefer quick short to medium radius turns over fewer big radius turns – skiers looking for a big radius tool from Atomic should look to the Kailas or Janak.



Atomic Free Dream Dimensions: 117-82-106, Length: 150/157/164/171/178cm Weight: 2.56kg/5.64lbs (171cm) The Free Dream is a ski mountaineering tool. Its short lengths and light-weight make it a good choice for mountaineering exploits. The 82mm waist gives you plenty of ski if the snow gets funky while the ski's carbon construction gives it a solid edge in variable high alpine snow conditions. This a good choice if you are looking for a light ski to bag peaks, ski spring chutes, or take on an extended expedition. It is well matched to light boots/binders and is available in short lengths.



Black Diamond Havoc Dimensions: 123-88-112 (175cm) Lengths: 165/175/185cm Weight: 3.6kg/7.92lbs (175cm) \$500 The Havoc is a ski on many peoples quiver of one list. Dimensionally, the 88mm waist allows a good skier performance in a wide variety of snow. The Havoc is a powerful ski for its dimensions. Its solid platform and overall stiffness accommodate the needs of aggressive skiers when pushed hard while its reliable edge keeps skiers of all levels happy in consistent snow. Testers found it settles into its own medium to big radius turn unless asked otherwise. We have come to prefer this ski with a fixed heel but it has a freeheel following as well. Although dimensionally the ski is the same as last year, this year's model moves to wood construction. It has remarkable torsional strength and carves firm snow that rattles many other skis. We see the Havoc as an alpine tool, not our pick for powder runs or resort cruising, but a solid choice for the varied snow found above treeline and in true alpine terrain. The Havoc is best enjoyed with medium to bigger boots and solid ski skills.



Black Diamond Voodoo Dimensions: 123-88-112 (175cm) Lengths: 165/175/185cm Weight: 3.3kg/7.25lbs (175cm) \$490 Built on the success of the Havocs dimensions, the Voodoo drops almost a half pound (6.5oz) off the Havocs weight. Its flex maintains the confidence found in the Havoc but its lighter weight creates a responsive personality. It maintains a solid platform underfoot and although we skied it both free and fixed heel, we thought it served skiers with a parallel bias. This is a Rocky Mountain touring ski that will run varied snow and terrain without complaint.



G3 Ace Dimensions: 116-81-104 Lengths: 163/170/177/184cm Weight: 2.95kg/6.4lb (177cm) \$699 The Ace is a no frills touring rig. Given its weight and size, it skis well with any modern boot. The Ace is a finesse ski, not a power rig. Its dimensions allow for performance in soft and hard snows; heck, three years ago, its waste dimension was relatively big. This classically dimensioned ski is being dwarfed by the need for speed and girth that is fueling the fat ski movement. If you prefer rhythmic medium radius turns, enjoy a good alpine tour, and do not need to push the speed envelope or charge the resort to have fun, the Ace fits your profile. Although we have skied it free and fixed, we say go fixed on this one.



K2 Work Stinx Dimensions: 124-88-111 Lengths: 167/174/181cm Weight 3.6kg/7.9lb (174cm) \$549 The new Work Stinx is a soft snow and mixed condition animal. The ski rides through variable snow with ease. If you are looking for a tele ski to chase snow around the resort or ski the backcountry, the Work fills the bill. Its round flex and unwavering tip ensure the ski keeps you in the fall line with minimal effort on the driver's part. That said, bigger boots help drive the tips through mixed snow. This is a tele skier's ski, fun to turn in all but the firmest snow at all speeds and all but the shortest turn shapes. The Work is our new pick for a quiver of one from K2 Telemark.



K2 Mt. Baker Dimensions: 121-88-108, Lengths: 167/174/181cm Weight: 3.9kg 8.5lbs (174cm) \$529 The Baker has evolved a little each season toward its current design. The latest Baker retains its predictable, reliable nature. Like so many skis in its class, the Baker is competing with some powerful skis so K2 refined its performance level with a new tip and sidecut profile. Still a soft snow ski, the new tip design adds a new level of stability in junky snow. Skiers agreed it was lively at speed and settled into its medium radius arcs without complaint. The Mt Baker is a good match for the aggressive AT skier who doesn't count grams and is looking for an all mountain ride.



K2 Mt. Baker Superlight Dimensions: 121-88-108, Lengths: 167/174/181cm Weight: 2.95kg/6.5lbs (174cm) \$549 The Baker Superlight is a welcome addition to K2's AT line-up. It is nice to get the nod that not everyone wants damper burlier ski. Damp heavy boards are fun at the resort but typically overkill on a tour. The Superlight offers touring friendly construction that remains reasonable on firm snows. Soft snow and up hill performance are the its forte but it can handle whatever snow comes its way. This ski was actually favored over the Mt Baker by testers for overall performance when considering a touring ski. Its wood core yields a relatively damp ride and makes for easy full ski carving in all but the hardest snow. Although medium and larger radius turns are easy by design, the ski's light swing weight yields a ski that turns when you need it to turn. This is a practical all conditions touring ski and is one of the lightest skis in its size class; anyone with a soft snow bias looking for a single ski to meet all their touring needs should check it out.



Movement Thunder Dimensions: 122-89-111 Lengths: 177/187cm Weight: 3.72kg/8.2lb (177cm) \$665 Like its big brother the Goliath, the Thunder prefers big boots and lock down mode. Flex is stout and the platform underfoot serves aggressive skiers. The Thunder's weight is more in line with other boards marketed for backcountry use. Still, it likes to play hard and responds best to a big radius mindset. Like many of the newer freeride and cross boundary ski options, the Thunder is at home at the resort.



Ski Trab Stelvio Freeride Dimensions: 117-84-105, Lengths: 164/171/178/185cm 3.02kg/6.6lbs (171cm) \$619 Ski Trab has built its reputation around high performance rando racer skis. The company is less well known (especially in North America) for their all mountain offerings but the Stelvio Freeride could build this reputation. Its relatively moderate dimensions ski bigger than they look on paper. This ski kept a wide variety of testers happy, carved the groom and handled soft snows with style. It offers round full ski engagement and turn versatility. It's not a huckster on par with skis pushing the 100mm waist category but it stands out in the mid 80's waist category as a solid versatile ski. Its medium radius bias and moderate side-cut create a balanced all mountain board. We skied it fixed heel but would not hesitate to try it with tele binders. Topping off its balanced ride is a wood veneer finish and classic Euro crest that give the ski a classic look.

Not so Fat - 70-80mm waist



Atomic RT80 Dimensions: 121-80-107 Lengths: 157/164/171/178cm Weight: 2.84kg/6.25lbs (171cm) Light, stable, and carvy like its big brother the 86, the 80 turns fast and mixes up the tele parallel ride with ease. This ski likes to carve and

we see it as a resort tele board that does great with any modern boot. Like the 86, it takes advantage of Atomic's alpine line Torsion Flex Technology (TFC) and, although we are not big on technology acronyms, it does a great job of keeping these skis damp and light. It makes a fine touring rig but its waist limits its deep snow appeal when you have skis like the Kailas and the RT86 available.



Dynafit Seven Summits Dimensions: 113/78/100 (170cm) Lengths: 156/163/170/178 Weight 2.64kg/5.8lb 170cm \$540 Given the name, it is no surprise that we found this ski to be a mountaineering tool. The Seven Summits is light, modestly stiff, and responsive with its 78mm waist. Although the ski handled a day at the resort, its personality did not shine until we took it up Mt Hood for a spring summit ski. Frozen corn on the ascent yielded to classic varied volcano conditions on the descent. It takes a few turns to dial in the skis light swing-weight if you are used to a bigger board, but once you understand how much input is enough, the ski is responsive and confident. Going light makes so much sense on alpine tours and for mountaineering. The Seven Summits fits in the quiver very nicely.



K2 World Piste Dimensions: 122-80-107 Lengths: 167/174/181cm Weight 3.2kg/7lb (174cm) \$519 The World Piste, once our choice for a quiver of one, continues to hold its own in a variety of snow. However, given the plethora of versatile skis in the 88 and larger waist category, the World has some serious competition these days, including from its own big brother the Work Stinx. For those who prefer a smaller boot, World is still a solid choice for all around use but after a few season on skis closer to 90mm underfoot, testers are favoring bigger skis for all mountain use. The World Piste remains true to its tele roots and it offers round predictable turns. We still feel this ski has a soft snow bias as it is not as stiff as some skis in its class. It responds well to a neutral tele binding. Experienced skiers enjoyed it and newbies said it gave them confidence. Need a ski that does it all and you prefer to ride through the snow versus on top? The World Piste fits the bill.



Karhu Kodiak Dimensions: 117-80-105 Lengths: 166/176/186cm Weight 3.4kg/7.5lb (176cm) \$525 The Kodiak is a tele skiers ski. It falls into the tele position with ease and holds a variety of turn shapes. Although lively and predictable, the Kodiak's flex keeps it powerful when you need to step on it in firmer snow or steep terrain. This is a ski for the tele purist who understands the benefits of an 80mm waist.



Karhu Guide Dimensions: 109-78-95 Lengths: 165/175/185cm Weight 2.5kg/5.5lb (176cm) \$325 The Guide is unique in this review as it is the only ski included with a waxless patterned base. Officially part of the XCD (cross-country downhill) category, these skis take the XCD category to a new level of performance. Using Karhu's tried and true Omnitrak base, the Guide is a true backcountry tele ski. It is light, climbs a low angle skin track with ease, and descends like a modern tele ski, not to mention, you could throw a skin on it too. These skis are wide enough for general backcountry touring/turning missions and are light enough for any off track touring. It skis well with the lightest of boots and begs for a basic three-pin binding. A ski like the Guide opens up a whole new window on terrain and touring. Tempted? Try 'em.



Ski Trab Duo Freerando Dimensions: 112/110-79-96, Length: 157/164/171/178cm, 2.58kg/5.6lbs (171cm) \$649 The Freerando offers a good balance between light and capable. Like its European roots would lead you to believe, this is a ski made for mountaineering. It has a short radius bias and is a good tool for technical skiing. It is by no means a big radius ripper, it is the ski to grab when grams count or for your local rando race series. When the snow conditions get tough and your legs are tired, the Freerando will get you down the hill. It features the distinctive double profile Ski Trab tip that interfaces with their proprietary skin mount system.

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Photo: Scott DW Smith

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Women's Skis

Fattest - 90-100mm waist



Black Diamond Joule Dimensions: 126-95-114 (175cm) Lengths: 155/165/175cm Weight: 3.4kg/7.5lbs (175cm) \$540 The Joule follows the Kilowatt's dimensions to create a lighter board designed with women skiers in mind. We had limited testing with the Joule but what we had proved it offers a damp stable platform that appealed to both genders. The Joule responds to your needs but prefers a medium radius turns and soft or carvable snow. Even given its softer flex, big boots and active binders or a fixed heel will help you get the most out of this ski.



Karhu Bertha Dimensions: 134-100-125 Lengths: 165/172cm Weight: 3.28kg 7.2lb (172cm) \$625 Karhu's women specific line benefits from their Greenlight wood core and the Bertha is the latest addition to the line-up, not to mention the biggest women's specific tele ski on the market. The skis are remarkably damp and relatively light for their size. We found the Bertha to be a freeheel turner at its core and surprisingly agile for its dimensions. Sure it is a powder ski, but anyone looking for 100mm underfoot should know that.



Karhu Jil Dimensions: 124-90-113 Lengths: 158/165/172cm Weight 3kg/6.6lb (165cm) \$525 The Jil is revamped this year with the new wood core and graphics to match. Testers familiar with earlier generation Jils found it offered improved handling and was easier to ski. Like the Jak, the Jil skied more agile than its dimension would lead you to anticipate. This could serve as an all mountain board for experienced skiers or a horizon expander for less advanced women.

Fatter - 81-89mm waist



G3 Aviatrix Dimensions: 116-81-104, Lengths: 156/163/170cm Weight: 3kg/6.6lb (163cm) \$600 With dimensions that mirror the Ace and Baron, the Aviatrix is a utilitarian ski. We skied it tele and felt it was well suited to a free heel. Testers agreed that it was very capable, not full of personality but never leaving you wondering whether it could make a turn either. If powder is your passion, you can find a more dedicated soft snow ski but if you are less able to pick your days, the Aviatrix will ski it all and does not require a big boot to stay in control. Predictable turn initiation and reliable edges round out its personality.



G3 Siren Dimensions: 121-88-109, Lengths: 157/166cm Weight: 3.3kg/7.2lb (166cm) \$616 The Siren has ranked well with women testers for a couple seasons now. It fits our new quiver of one dimension with its 88mm waist. More and more we feel the 85-95 waist is where it's at. The Siren was favored as an AT ski for skiers with a short and medium radius turn bias. It offers stability in bigger radius turns too as it is stable and damp but is most at home somewhere in the middle. Its weight is modest but stout enough to feel at home at the resort.



K2 Miss Baker Dimensions: 121-88-108, Length: 160/167cm Weight: 3.6kg/7.92lbs (167cm) K2 steps into new territory with women's AT specific skis. Expanding on the already well-known dimensions of the Baker/Work/Dawn Patrol series, the Miss Baker is a lively turner but requires a degree of attention to keep it turning quickly. The ski is reminiscent of the Dawn Patrol, good through varied and soft snows while inspiring medium to big radius arcs. She keeps her head at speed as long as you keep her out of the hard stuff and once you find the soft snow she responds with flair. The Miss Baker is a good call for solid female skiers looking for a predictable and capable board to ski in and out of bounds or to take hut tripping.



K2 Dawn Patrol Dimensions: 124-88-111, Lengths: 160/167cm Weight: 3.7kg/8.1lb 167cm \$539 Several seasons in the making, the current Dawn Patrol is now a staple in the tele world. Although you can find a lighter ski, the Dawn offers a damp stable ride good for variable and soft snow skiing. If you find the 167cm a little sluggish, try the 160cm. K2 advocates stepping down in size and the Dawn is a good ski to test this theory. The Dawn is at home on a hut trip and at the hill. K2's home is in the Northwest and the Dawn Patrol makes short work of classic Cascade snow.

Not so Fat - 70-80mm waist



K2 Shuks Anne Dimensions: 122-80-108 Lengths: 153/160/167/174cm Weight: 2.95kg /6.5lb (167cm) \$489 Given the popularity of the Shuksan in the men's line, the Shuks Anne has some big shoes to fill. Overall, the ski met expectations. It is an easy handling ski with a short to medium radius bias. Like the Shuksan, it has a backcountry bias. Its light swing-weight and modest flex are not designed for charging at the resort. The ski transitions through varied snow with confidence and is dreamy in boot top powder. When the going gets deep, it rallies but not with the same flair as a bigger ski.



Karhu Betty Dimensions: 117-80-105 Lengths: 156/166/176cm Weight 2.82kg/6.2lb (166cm) \$525 At 80 underfoot, the Betty is a responsive ski that is not afraid of firm snow. Like many Karhu skis, it shines in tele turns. Its flex did not speak to all skiers. Lighter weight skiers found it required focused input and skied best with fresh legs. Bigger skiers found it more forgiving and versatile. The Betty is a good choice for all but soft snow snobs and could be a fun mountaineering tool for women.

Stomp the landing.

Not the approach.



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