

2005 Ski Guide

TELEMARK
ALPINE TOURING

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Every year we gather the latest telemark and AT skis from the various manufacturers and head to our local hill with a diverse group of skiers. The majority of our time on the skis is spent in bounds at the resort but over the course of a couple of weeks we manage to hit a wide variety of snow conditions and we finish our review with a tour on some of the favorite boards. Our aim in reviewing skis is to help define each ski's personality in order to help you decide which ski suits your needs. Your choice in skis will depend on what type of snow and terrain you ski most often and your ability level. More than ever, the newest crop of telemark and alpine touring skis offer some serious real estate under foot. If your skis date back to the 20th century, now is an excellent time to consider your options and to join the 21st century.

Most companies now offer a ski that pushes 100mm width in the waist and exceeds 120mm in the tip while still offering a variety of versatile mid-fat skis. Telemark skis are no longer designed purely with touring in mind, just about every ski here is capable at the resort as well. That said, each model has a niche in which it excels and obviously not all skis will please all skiers in all conditions (although a few come close). Also, you will notice that more manufacturers than ever are offering women's specific skis. The women's specific boards offer alternative graphics and were designed with the feedback of female skiers. Finally, this is not an exhaustive list of what is available on the market. We focus on the newest boards and the time-tested favorites. If you do not see a ski here, try looking at last year's review in our web archives.

Skis are separated into 3 categories, High performance, All Mountain with a soft snow bias, All Mountain with a firm snow bias.

High Performance: These skis are often viewed as quiver skis. Many are the biggest boards available and although we tout the all-around versatility of several models, it takes a strong skier and big boots (T1, Syner-G, and up, etc) to enjoy them in all conditions. The boards all make a great compliment to a mid-fat ski, and have inspired more than one tester to consider cashing it in for the pursuit of deep snow. For the most part these boards are not for folks new to skiing but are best appreciated by folks looking to push their skiing and step into the world of fat skis.

All Mountain with a Soft Snow Bias: This category is for skis that are capable in all snow conditions but are better suited to softer off-piste and backcountry snows. Typically a bit softer and with a more even flex pattern than other skis, these boards are an excellent choice for backcountry adventures and when the resort reports double-digit snowfall. The skis in this category are suitable for all levels of skiers and will happily run with a range of boot styles.

All Mountain with a Firm Snow Bias: Here you'll find skis that perform well in all conditions but hold up to the firmer snows of the resort better than the skis with a soft snow bias. If you hit the hill more often than not, are looking for a fun carving ski, or can't always pick the epic powder days, these boards are for you. The skis in this category are suitable for all levels of skiers and will happily run with a range of boot styles.

HIGH PERFORMANCE



Atomic Tele Daddy - 126/99/116, Sizes: 163, 173, 183cm; 8lbs 2oz/pair (183cm); \$675 - One of the biggest waist widths around for tele-specific skis, the Tele Daddy hails from the Atomic Sugar Daddy alpine ski. It is characteristically Atomic in feel, stable and predictable. Stiffer than some of its competition, it holds its own in all snow, although getting from edge to edge on groomers takes some getting used to and big boots are a must. Its weight is good considering its size. The ski was most popular amongst more accomplished skiers as beginners did not feel the control they get with other Atomic boards. Another ski that inspires one to point 'em and enjoy the ride . . .



Black Diamond Havoc - 120/88/113 163, 173, 183cm, Densolite core 7 lb 15 oz (183s); \$549.00 - The Havoc, designed by Black Diamond and made by Atomic, shares some general characteristics with the Atomic feel, relatively stiff flex with stable predictable performance. Definitely a big boot board, the Havoc is most at home with larger radius turns and ranked best amongst accomplished skiers. If you enjoy running at speed in bounds or out with long radius turns at the top of your list, the Havoc will serve your needs well. Looking for a new school AT board, the Havoc should make your short list.



K2 Hippie Stinx - 125/95/118; 169, 179, 189cm; 9lbs 4oz (179); \$599 - Look out small children and hippies; these skis were made to go fast. A big board, they require a big boot and aggressive input. This is not a short radius powder eight ski; it is a big radius, big mountain, straight line ski. Relatively minimal side cut partnered with big dimensions make for a stable but less responsive ski for



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the average user. Testers were inspired to catch air as the Hippy "offers a bomber landing pad" and agreed there are more versatile big boards available but for those whose home mountain is on the scale of Whistler or for those looking to rip big mountain faces with as few turns as possible it should make the short list.



K2 Dawn Patrol - 122/89/112; 153, 160, 167, 174cm; 7lbs 6oz; \$519 - The Dawn Patrol takes the Work Stinx platform to create a woman's specific ski. Several of our lighter testers (male and female alike) found the Dawn Patrol more responsive than the Work Stinx. All around, the ski got great feedback from all but the biggest skiers in our test. A nice light swing weight makes these skis very easy to bring around in deep snow with any mid or upper level plastic boot. As with most K2's, the Dawn Patrol offers easy turn initiation and in the words of one tester "just likes to make turns". Another tester wrote these boards inspire me to move to Canada for the winter. Although capable at the resort, the Dawn Patrol scored consistently higher in soft snows.



K2 Work Stinx - 122/89/112; 167, 174, 181, 188cm; 7lbs 8oz; \$519 - K2's all purpose fat board with a distinct soft snow bias. The Work is at home making big radius turns but scored almost as well for medium radius too. The ski rates high for all varieties of deep snow but was less inspiring for hardpack resort skiing than some of its peers in the fat ski category. The Work is not as dependent on big boots as the other fat boards and a couple of testers found the T2 level boots sufficient. If you have a mid fat board or an older ski that suits your needs on firm snow, the Work Stinx makes an excellent tool for the backcountry and deep days at the hill.



Karhu Jak - 170; 120/90/110, 180; 127/97/117, 190; 127/97/117; 8lbs/14oz (180cm); \$519 - Karhu set a high standard in versatility for a fat ski with the Jak. The ski remains unchanged (aside from new graphics) from last season when its twin tip tail was shortened a bit (something we believe improved its versatility over the first generation). With a waist width in the upper 90's, the Jak is confident and predictable in all conditions be they deep or firm. Obviously a great tool for deep and heavy snows, testers agreed that given a little speed and big boots the Jak is a lot of fun for cruising and carving too. Although the Jak has a bias for big radius turns, it is more flexible in its radius size than most of the big boards. The ski responds well to both parallel and telemark technique but is not for a timid skier. It requires a big boot and an experienced driver for maximum enjoyment



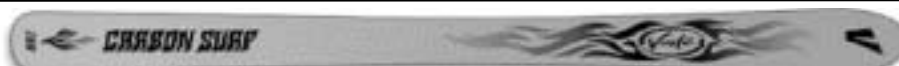
Karhu Jill - 160cm; 120/90/110, 170cm; 120/90/110, 180cm; 127/97/117; 180cm 7lbs 4oz; \$519 - The Jill takes its dimensions from the Jak while its internal construction differs. The result is lighter ski that remains confident and predictable in a wide variety of snow. The smaller sizes of the Jill sport a 90mm waist that testers found to be plenty wide to keep them afloat in deep and wet snows. Testers agreed that the Jill was best suited to strong skiers as it responds best to confident input. "The Jill is for women who want a ski that will let them push their limits" commented one tester. If you are an experienced skier looking for a ski that'll keep pace, the Jill should be on your list.



Karhu JAK BC - 170; 120/90/110, 180; 127/97/117, 190; 127/97/117; 180cm: 8lbs 2oz; \$539 - The Jak BC is a lighter weight version of the Jak (12oz lighter per pair) designed for touring and those preferring a lighter ski. The weight reduction is achieved by using carbon fiber and lighter core wood. The result is the familiar stability of the Jak with a lighter swing weight and thus a more responsive feel. Testers were split as to whether the Jak BC was as capable in mixed resort conditions as the Jak (bigger skiers preferred the feel of the Jak while smaller skiers saw the Jak BC as a good option) but testers agreed that the Jak BC should be the choice for folks looking for a more touring focused board. Testers also agreed that the BC still responded best to big boots such as the T1 or Syner-G.



Rossignol T4 - 122/94/112; 168, 178, 185, 195cm; 8lbs 13oz (185cm); \$525 - The T4 fits the Cadillac ride category offering skiers one of the dampest rides available for in a tele ski. The ski takes on wet and deep snows with ease. One tester commented that it was the softest of the big boards but Rossi's characteristic damp ride allowed for a stable feel on firm snow. Testers agreed it would be a good choice for an AT binding and that Big boots were a must for good tele control. Skiers looking for edge to edge speed and a quick turning profile should stick with the T3 but skiers with a big turns and soft snow in mind should give it a ride.



Voile Carbon Surf - 158/168cm 113/83/105; 178cm 120/87/112; 188cm 120/88/113; 6lbs 8oz (178cm). Designed with the backcountry powder purist in mind, the Carbon Surf will please a wide range of skiers looking for a backcountry biased ski. Their light weight makes touring a pleasure and means you do not need a big boot to drive the ski (they even respond well to the old leather supercomps). The Surf is no longer one of the fattest skis available yet its healthy waist will keep you afloat in deepest of snows. There are better alternatives for an all mountain resort ski but if you are looking for a dedicated touring board, the Carbon Surf should be on your list. Made in the USA.

ALL MOUNTAIN BACKCOUNTRY BIAS



Atomic TMX - 117/84/109, 168, 177, 184, 191cm; 7lbs 13 oz (184cm) \$643 Known as the TM EX last year the TMX takes on a slightly different profile this season but the ski remains popular with all testers. Atomic also changed the tip for 04 by removing the plastic cap that has been part of the ski for a couple seasons. We see this change as making it easier to fit skins to the tip. Known as a jack of all trades, the TMX has been pleasing a wide range of skiers in a wide range of snows for several seasons. The ski could easily be in the resort bias category but we have an off-piste bias and the ski performs great as an AT board. With slightly less side cut and a stiffer profile than the other mid fat boards, the TMX prefers medium to larger radius turns and handles speed well. Less aggressive and novice skiers should try the TM22 but for anyone else this is a tried and true board with loads of respect from the AT and the Tele worlds.



K2 World Piste - 114/78/105; 167, 174, 181, 188; 6lbs 14oz; \$489 - Once again, the World Piste sets a great standard for the all mountain backcountry bias category. Like most K2's, the World initiates turns easily and is quite happy making medium and short radius arcs. The 04-05 model received a new paint job and a little extra dampening. The changes in construction are difficult to discern from the previous model and as we said last year, this ski makes a great quiver of one. The World skis variable snows like no other ski, floats the pow without complaint and is a capable resort board too. It is a great choice for west coast skiers. One tester mounted a pair up with AT bindings and finds them a great a solution for a woman's AT ski.



K2 Instinx - 114/78/105; 160, 167, 174; \$479 - Based on the dimensions of the World Piste, the Instinx is a mid fat ski designed for women. Essentially a World Piste minus the metal in the top sheet, the Instinx ranked well with all ability levels of women skiers. Ideally suited to soft snow the ski was well received in a variety of snows but more aggressive skiers found it a bit weak on firm snows. The ski responds well to all levels of boots and makes a nice powder ski for the discerning female skier.



K2 Shuksan - 114/78/105; 160, 167, 174, 181; 6lbs 6oz; \$469 - Following its makeover last year, the Shuksan quietly developed a dedicated following of AT skiers (its intended market). The ski shares the dimensions of the World Piste and is every bit as utilitarian as the World. It also shares the World's ability to make short work of variable snows. The ski prefers medium to short radius turns but can go big when needed. It is light, responsive, and makes an excellent backcountry and ski mountaineering tool. It even comes in a 160cm.



Karhu Kodiak - 117-80-105, 166, 176, 186cm; 7lbs; \$499 Karhu steps into the world of mid fat skis with the Kodiak, one of two skis in their Bear category. Using new technology in their line, Karhu is onto something with these skis as feedback was great from all levels of skiers. Lively, playful, and all-a-rounder were all used by our testers to describe the ski. Several testers made direct comparisons to the World Piste saying the Kodiak handles all snow conditions with ease and felt particularly at home in mixed conditions. The ski is a little stiffer in overall flex than the World and is very capable in area or out. A great west coast all mountain board.

ALL MOUNTAIN RESORT BIAS



Atomic TM22 - 106/72/98; 160, 170, 180, 190, 200cm; 6lbs 3oz; \$399 - A proven all around ski, the TM 22 has a reputation as a utilitarian tool to meet your needs in and out of the ski area. The ski responds well to all sizes of skiers and modern boot styles. A few testers found the ski to have a stronger sweet spot in parallel than in tele so it may appeal to those with an alpine background. Regardless of your

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turn bias, from casual backcountry turns to rippin groomers, the TM22 serves well.



Atomic Femme Fatal - 106/72/98; 160,170,180cm; 6lbs 3oz; \$399 - Built on Atomic's tried and true TM 22 platform - the Femme Fatal has been fine tuned for women skiers. The result is a responsive ski. Female testers agreed the ski was great in the bumps and makes for a nice all around resort ski. The waist is a bit narrow for heavy snows but the ski should keep most folks happy for general resort fun.



Black Diamond Crossbow - 115/82/105(171cm); 163, 171, 179, 187cm 7 lb. 5 oz. (179cm); \$549.00 - The Crossbow is a stiff flexing board for aggressive AT and freeheel skiers. The ski has healthy dimensions and skis big for its size so be prepared to step down a few centimeters in length from what you may be used to. The Densolite core torsion bow technology help keep the ski light for its size but the Crossbow still responds best to big boots and big quads. Testers found a bias for medium to long radius parallel turns. The ski bridges the gap between new school and ski mountaineering tool. One tester added that if he lived in the Rockies, this would be his ski of choice.



Black Diamond Ethic - 112-79-102 (176cm) 158, 167, 176, 185cm; 6 lb 14 oz; \$559 - The Ethic is the next generation version of Black Diamond's popular Mira ski. The Ethic utilizes Black Diamonds Dual Torsion Bow and new 3-D hybrid Densolite/wood core technologies. The result is a stable, even flexing ski. We skied it both AT and Tele in our test and found more aggressive skiers preferred it with a locked heel while intermediate skiers found it a predictable tele ski. The ski easily runs a wide range of conditions and handles a day at the resort with ease. But testers agreed that this ski was best suited to ski mountaineering, AT or Tele. In the words of one tester, these skis inspire confidence when making jump turns on steep firm snow. Mid to upper level boots yield the best results. Although it is not as hard charging as the Havoc it fits the all mountain profile well. Beginners found the Nunyo livelier on the groomers but the Ethic more confident when the going got steep.



Black Diamond Mystic - 110/79/100 (167cm); 158,167,176cm; 6lbs 1oz; \$559 - The Mystic is Black Diamonds first foray in to women's

specific skis. It is cut to the same dimensions as the Ethic, but slightly lighter and softer through its flex. Like the Ethic, the torsional rigidity inspires confidence in steep chutes and makes for a great ski mountaineering tool. With less side cut than most of the mid fats the Ethic has a more traditional feel and serves more accomplished skiers better than beginner.



Black Diamond Nunyo - 107/73/97; 159, 167, 175, 183, 191cm; 7 lb. 1 oz (183s); \$499.00 - The Nunyo is a responsive ski that holds a nice carve in firm snow. One tester found it the liveliest of the Black Diamond skis. Although not a powder pig by today's standards, given the 73mm waist and healthy tip, the Nunyo is a versatile ski. The ski rated well among our testers as an all mountain resort board whether you live in the Rockies, the Pacific Northwest, or New England.



K2 She's Piste - 107/68/97; 153, 160, 167, 174, 181; 6lbs; \$469 - Newly reworked from last years version, the She's Piste has a trimmer waistline giving it more side cut than last season. The result is a lively ski that likes to turn. Testers agreed it was a good choice for beginner and intermediate skiers whose primary focus is groomed snow. Although K2 positions the ski most at home at the resort, our testers found it tours well but is best suited to cold dry snows.



Rossignol T3 - 113/73/103; 150, 160, 170,176, 182, 190cm; 7lbs 14oz; \$475 - Rossi's mid fat board, the T3 fits the all around profile for most skiers. Its healthy side cut makes it responsive and beginner and intermediate skiers found it very turnable. Like all Rossi skis, the T3 is damp making for fun turns on the groomers. It is Rossi's best ski for touring but given its overall damp ride we placed in the resort bias group.



Rossignol T2 - 109/70/99 150,160,170,176,182,190 The T2 is a resort oriented ski that will keep an attentive driver happy in consistent and firmer snows. The ski will track just about any turn radius and easily initiates turns. The ski inspired several positive comments about skiing bumps and cruising groomers. Although the dimensions are narrow relative to many of today's skis, the T2 can still handle soft snow. This is a good all around resort running board.

A Fun Gathering of the Backcountry Community

Whistler
British Columbia
Jan. 8th

Crested Butte
Colorado
Feb. 12th

Mammoth Mt.
T.B.A.

Alpentel
Washington
T.B.A.

Marmot
N. Amer. Championship
Jackson Hole
Wyoming
Mar. 26th

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