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The Best Winter Boots

UPDATED DECEMBER 14, 2016

Your guide

Lisa Maloney

After a collective 100 hours of research and on-the-ground trials with seven testers (three women and four men) in 17 different pairs of winter boots during a cold Alaskan winter, both in the city and on the trails, we've selected the [Columbia Women's Heavenly Omni-Heat Organza Lace Up Boot](#) and the [Sorel Men's Madson Original Boot](#) as our favorites. Both models are attractive enough to use for chores and commuting in town without sacrificing an ounce of functionality, and both have surprisingly effective waterproofing given their good looks.

Last updated: December 14, 2016

After readers asked us—over and over—why our picks for the best winter boots last year were so, um, not terribly fashionable, we’ve rethought and expanded our guide. Yes, we still have a pick for folks who are spending a lot of time outside in the most frigid conditions—like last year, that’s the [Columbia Bugaboot Plus III Titanium Omni-Heat](#) in both [women’s](#) and [men’s](#) versions—but we’ve also added boots that will keep you warm, dry, and looking good when you’re cruising around town. Those are the [Columbia Women’s Heavenly Omni-Heat Organza Lace Up Boot](#) and the [Sorel Men’s Madson Original Boot](#). We have more boot picks, too: We’ve chosen Keen’s Durand Polar WP ([women’s](#), [men’s](#)) for outdoor activities like hiking in the snow. And since we’ve learned that winter boots sell out quickly, we’re offering backup choices for most categories.



Our pick



[Sorel Men’s Madson Original Boot](#)

The best men’s winter boot

Our men’s boot pick is comfortable and flexible and wears almost like a shoe, while keeping feet plenty warm in moderate winter conditions.

\$185 from Amazon

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$210.

[Columbia Women’s Heavenly Omni-Heat Organza](#)

The best women’s winter boot

This calf-height, lace-up winter boot aced our waterproofing tests and is





lined with reflective material to keep your feet toasty warm.

\$140 from Columbia

\$140 from Amazon

Our testers were surprised by just how well the [**Sorel Men's Madson Original Boot**](#) combined smart, professional looks with a rugged nature that can handle outdoor chores and even short outings. The Madson is insulated for mild to moderate winter conditions and offers excellent waterproofing, surprisingly grippy traction on ice, and a comfortable, flexible feel underfoot. It comes in black, brown, and a khaki-brown combo.

Women's boots often sacrifice function for aesthetics, but the [**Columbia Heavenly Omni-Heat Organza**](#) is both practical and good-looking, with a low-profile heat-reflecting layer that keeps your feet warm down to zero degrees, excellent waterproofing, and a surprisingly comfortable, slipper-like fit.

Runner-up

[**Keen Men's Durand Polar WP**](#)

A more rugged men's style



A better option for those who spend more time walking through ice and snow than on pavement. It's fitting that this design also has more-classic hiking-boot looks.

\$170* from Keen

\$140 from Amazon

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$140.

[**Keen Women's Durand Polar WP**](#)

A more rugged women's style



The women's version has a faux-fur collar around the top but otherwise offers similar styling to the men's boot. It also performs just as well.

\$171* from Keen

\$200 from Amazon

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$200.

The Keen Durand Polar WP ([women's](#), [men's](#)) offers the best combination of warmth, traction, support, waterproofing, and flexibility for most people who spend more time on out-of-town adventures than in town. That said, the Durand Polar WP still walks easily enough for in-town errands or chores like shoveling snow, and as long as you're active it'll keep you warm in temperatures as low as zero degrees.

Also great



L.L.Bean Men's Snow Sneakers 3, Mid Lace-Up

For hikers

Comfortable and sporty, these boots combine agility, warmth, and stability on everything but the most slippery surfaces.

\$110 from L.L.Bean



L.L.Bean Women's Snow Sneakers 3, Mid Lace-Up

For hikers

The women's version has a slightly different seam detailing but offers the same comfortable and sporty sneaker-like feel.

\$110 from L.L.Bean

The L.L.Bean Snow Sneakers 3 boots ([women's](#), [men's](#)) live up to their name, offering a sneaker-like feel for hikers and anyone else interested in spending a lot of time outdoors in the winter. The insulation is excellent, taking you right down to zero degrees if you're active. The waterproofing is excellent, too, and these boots are stable underfoot on everything except smooth ice.

Also great



Columbia Men's Bugaboot Plus III Titanium Omni-Heat

For really cold feet or hardcore outdoor fun

Our previous top pick, these boots still offer the best balance of warmth, waterproofing, and walkability—but they're bulky enough that we'd reserve them for only the most extreme conditions.

[Buy from Amazon](#)

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$170.



Columbia Women's Bugaboot Plus III Titanium Omni-Heat

For really cold feet or hardcore outdoor fun

Even though this is no longer our top pick for everyday use, it remains our favorite boot when you need the best blend of warmth, waterproofing, and easy walkability.

[\\$170 from Columbia](#)

[\\$170 from Amazon](#)

If you spend a lot of time outdoors in seriously cold temperatures, we think you'll love the Columbia Bugaboot Plus III Titanium Omni-Heat ([women's](#), [men's](#)). Its low-profile Omni-Heat layer—a film of metallic dots—works very well to reflect your body heat back at you, while the boot's structure strikes a perfect balance of support and walkability, with superior waterproofing and a fit that accommodates most feet.

Also great



[Columbia Peakfreak Venture Mid Waterproof Omni-Heat](#)

A sporty men's boot for town

These mid-cut boots feel almost like a shoe, but they use the same heat-retaining technology as the heavier Bugaboot Plus III Titanium, so they're surprisingly warm despite the low-profile fit and feel.

\$110 from Amazon

The [Columbia Peakfreak Venture Mid Waterproof Omni-Heat](#) men's boot offers excellent insulation and traction on ice, with a flexible, sneaker-like feel underfoot and a roomy toe box to accommodate feet that are too wide for our top pick.

Also great



[L.L.Bean Men's Wildcat Boots Pro](#)

For below zero degrees

One of the warmest boots we tested (you'll know if you need it), this style is overbuilt by necessity but still comfortable.

\$170 from L.L.Bean



L.L.Bean Women's Wildcat Boots Pro

For below zero degrees

Among the warmest and roomiest boots we tested. They're also a little clunky, which won't appeal to everybody, but if warmth is your main priority this is the style for you.

\$160 from L.L.Bean

If insulation is your top priority or you plan to be out in the cold without many chances to move around and warm up, the L.L.Bean Wildcat Boots ([women's](#), [men's](#)) are impressively warm, supportive, and surprisingly comfortable. This style is a little clunky, but you'll appreciate that structure when the temperatures drop below zero but your feet stay warm.

Also great



Muck Boot Arctic Excursion Mid

For cold, wet conditions

These rubber boots deliver leak-free waterproofing and fleece-lined warmth. For slogging and slush.

\$107* from Amazon

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$140.

If your winter conditions tend toward the wet and cold, or if you just want boots that can handle the very worst that a spring melt throws at you, the [Muck Boot Arctic Excursion Mid](#) is our top pick. Essentially a fleece-lined rubber boot, the Arctic Excursion Mid is surprisingly warm—good down to about 20 degrees—with flawless waterproofing to help you move confidently on days when you're spending a lot of time slogging through slush and splashing through endless puddles.

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Runner-up 

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Join the discussion...



Julie Fiset · 4 months ago

Last winter I wore Baffin (Chloe) winter boots. They are the warmest boots I ever had. Not really stylish but waterproof and really warm. The only other thing that keeps my feet as warm as Baffin does are my Neos Explorer over shoes. Again not stylish at all, but it get the job done.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



GearTrade · 7 months ago

If there was a “state boot” of Alaska, it would be the Xtratuf. There are many models of this rugged, all around slop boot, but the Legacy in 15”

is certainly one of the most popular. These neoprene boots are a staple aboard fishing boats and anywhere waterproof, non-slip, tough boots are needed.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



Alissa K · 10 months ago

I ended up with a pair of Zdar felt boots (Sascha) after getting so tired of having cold feet. My circulation sucks and I stand at a bus stop in weather down to -10. The cold always seems to come creeping through the soles of winter boots, so I thought I'd try something totally different. I've worn them in weather as cold as -13 and (with two pairs of wool socks - what I wear all winter) never felt the cold. Fortunately I hit a sale so didn't have to pay their high price, but I highly recommend them if you can find a sale or can afford the full price.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



Chris Camp · 10 months ago

I just took a winter trip to Yosemite. Temp ranged from 15-45. We had snow, rain, deep puddles of water and slush. and hiked on a snowy trail for a couple of miles (with occasional deep snow).

I bought the Columbia Bugaboot Plus III Titanium Omni-Heat and the Columbia Heavenly Omni-Heat for my mom. Both boots were fantastic. The Bugaboot Plus III is insanely warm. Feet were never cold. And never wet. On warmer days (~40), my feet felt hot at times (hiking a fair amount). I got the 9.5 and the fit was a tiny bit big, but still ok.

My mom had a very good experience with Heavenly. Not as warm as the Bugaboot, after a couple miles of hiking in snow her feet did feel colder than she wanted. But the rest of the time, including basically wading through slush filled puddles and long hikes in cold weather, she was very happy. 7.5 fit her a little snug (but ok), so these may run a tiny bit small.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



KokoTheTalkingApe · 10 months ago

Re Keens: I have owned and worn out perhaps 8 pairs of boots and shoes from Keen.

The good:

- They fit me. They have unusually wide and tall toe boxes and narrow insteps, which are good for my unusually long toes.
- They are, as a whole, soft and comfortable.

The bad:

- They are often thoughtlessly designed and constructed. I have a pair of chukkas where top eyelets are so high that the laces don't rest on the tongue, they rest right on the front of my ankle. So tightening the laces makes them dig into my ankle. I have another pair where some fabric layered between the lining and the heel counter bunches up, creating odd bumps that irritate my heel. The boots are otherwise in perfect shape. I may get a cobbler to repair them, if I can be bothered.
- They use inferior materials. I have a pair of shoes that came with cotton laces that wore out within a few months. I have another pair of

[see more](#)

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Richard Berg · 10 months ago

Did you consider the new North Face model? (Chilkat 400) They were Outdoor Gear Lab's top pick for 2016. <http://m.outdoorgearlab.com...>

Also note: they consider the Columbia Bugaboos (your top pick for "frigid climate, good looks be damned") to perform merely middle-of-the-pack on that front.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Scott Resnick · a year ago

Did you guys come across any Baffin Boots that you liked? I'm told they

Are really good.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Matthew · a year ago

A pretty standard waterproof warm winter boot I see everywhere is the classic 8" "Bean Boots" from LL Bean which has been around for about a century now. I don't see in this list. Is there a reason that boot wasn't tested? Or was it tested and didn't perform as well as the others?

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Tara · a year ago

Is Organza just the particular color scheme you recommend? The Heavenly Organza is out in my size, but there are Columbia Omni Heat Heavenly boots in other colors still available. Are they essentially the same boot in a different color? It was surprising to me that you'd recommend a specific color

recommend a specific color.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



pinotina · a year ago

What's the difference between the L.L.Bean Men's Snow Sneakers 3, Mid Lace-Up, and the Columbia Peakfreak Venture Mid Waterproof Omni-Heat? They both sound like sneaker-like boots that are pretty good all-around. They're also the same price.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Shirley · a year ago

I slipped on black ice on my driveway because of the boots I was wearing and tore my rotator cuff! I am very careful in choosing winter footwear now and find that there isn't much of a selection in stylish winter footwear for women with proper soles for traction!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



ws808 → Shirley · 10 months ago

Check out the ice grip testing done at ratemytreads dot com.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Porkrind → Shirley · 10 months ago

Pajar has some boots with retractable ice spikes:

http://www.pajar.com/ca_en/...

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Brielle · a year ago

Did you guys try out any other Sorel boots like the Joan of Arctic or Tofino? I know they might not be the most waterproof options out there but they're very popular and I'd love to know how they stand up to testing. I'd personally be willing to give up some functionality for fashion to have a winter boot that I would be happy to wear to a party, or out to dinner, etc.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



AnnieM → Brielle · a year ago

Bogs Boots. Totally comfy, warm, & leakproof, and come in a wide variety of styles, colors, and patterns. :-)

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Albin · a year ago

I make a distinction between winter city boots and country boots. In the city the snow is not clean, but treated with salts and sand and whatever "green" muck is mandated by ordinance, and laces quickly become a stiff and crumbly nuisance that messes up and makes them unpleasantly wet or stiff whenever you take them off or put them on. I have some decent waterproof lace up hikers for out in the woods, but go for zip sided boots in the city.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



ap14rcf70 · a year ago



Any general comments on IceBug products?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



ap14rcf70 · a year ago

They seem to only have a couple sizes at Amazon.com: Columbia Bugaboot Plus III Titanium Omni-Heat Winter Boots - Men's ... is there a newer version ?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erin Price Community → ap14rcf70 · a year ago

That's the current model. Stock may be a little low due to high demand at this time of year. It looks like Amazon as all sizes except for 11, but just in case that's your size, we provided several buying links (we thought stock might be scarce at this time of year).

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Aaron Adams · a year ago

I would love to see you test the Arc'teryx Bora² Mid GTX Hiking Boot with the Gore-Tex Insulated Mid Liner.

The idea of a separate Gore-Tex liner, rather than one sewn into the boot, certainly sounds like a winner for waterproofing. Looking at the liner reviews on Arcteryx.com, I'm seeing (anecdotal) evidence that these rate highly on warmth too.

As somebody who loves the idea of investing in one boot and two liners to cover both hiking and winter, it would be good to know how these stack up.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Rick Reed · a year ago

A lab here in Toronto just released test results of winter boot traction on ice... only 9 of 98 tested boots met even the lowest standard. None met the highest standard.

Would be worth a look when this guide is next updated. Slip/fall injuries are a big deal in winter, and any boots that have better traction are worth considering.

<http://www.ratemytreads.com/>

5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erin Price Community → Rick Reed · a year ago

Thanks for the resource. I'll be sure to share this with our reviewers!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Dustin → Rick Reed · a year ago

This is no joke. I broke my leg last March slipping on an icy hill, and it was 100% the fault of the boots I was wearing. This was the result:



see more

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erin Price Community → Dustin · a year ago

Yikes! We hope you've found some good ones to keep you safe on the ice this year!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Murktastic → Rick Reed · a year ago

I was just about to post that. :)

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Jaki Jo · a year ago

So this is all fantastic, but let's be honest, boots are also a fashion statement, and as a New Yorker, I want to look cute as well as have warm dry feet. Any plans to test some more attractive boots this winter (ones with fur trim, prettier colours, etc) ?

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›




AnnieM → Jaki Jo · a year ago

Jaki Jo, check out BOGS Boots - you will not find a better selection of cute boots that keep your feet warm and do not leak, ever. I live in NW PA, so I've seen my share of snow, slush, and near-or-below zero temps. I bought my first pair about 3 winters ago (and more since then, for fashion variety), and they still keep my feet as warm & dry as the first time I wore them. And the *variety* - tall, short, solid colors, patterns - it's incredible. Many stores only carry a limited selection (around here, just plain black - ech.); in NYC you may not have that problem, though! Once I determined the size I needed (they run a little small), I looked online for deals in colors/patterns I liked. And remember to look for online discount codes, too, as you can save a ton of \$\$\$ that way. Happy Shopping! :-)


^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Erin Price Community → Jaki Jo · a year ago


 We recently updated this guide and we made an effort to include more stylish options. Take a look and feel free to let us know if there's anything else you'd like to see covered.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **Jaki Jo** → Erin Price · a year ago


Ooh, those Columbia Heavenly Organza ones are pretty cute! I'm so happy you reviewed some more stylish options, thank you!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **Yariv Yanay** · 2 years ago

How about a vegan-friendly non-leather alternative?

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **Jonathan Eyler-Werve** → Yariv Yanay · a year ago

Some of the insulated rubber boots might work for you. Try a Kamik Icebreaker.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **tony kaye** Community → Yariv Yanay · 2 years ago

I can check, but that's an extremely tall order. I know some are out there, but we haven't specifically tested any. Noted though!


^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **Stephen Newport** → tony kaye · 10 months ago

I would also appreciate a take on this. It's not really a tall order, just requires some research. Leather is simply not an option for me. I have a pair of Kamik's Canuks, they are seriously warm with removable liners and comforting for heavy snow, but I would also like to know about a more all around every day boot.


Thanks!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **Lauren Dragan** → tony kaye · a year ago

Tony, I'd love an answer to that too, though I know it's not always the easiest to find. The women's Columbia Omni-heat look as though they are mostly non-leather, but I can't tell about that trim near the rubber base. It could be faux... or possibly not. Sadly, not having cute/rugged shoes is one of the biggest vegan drawbacks. Seriously.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

 **totally awesome** · 2 years ago

bought the bugaboo titanium iii plus (mens). i have worn them now twice. once to shovel the snow (less than 20 minutes outside) and now yesterday i went to play in the snow with my two year old son. less than 45 minutes outside in ankle deep snow and my right boot has a

leak. my upper leg was dry and only my foot was wet. worst boot purchase i have ever made as i usually stick to goretex for waterproof garments/shoes. i can't believe i have much cheaper goretex shoes and boots that are much more reliable than these supposedly top of the line boots.

bottom line: if you need waterproof - these are not it.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



tony kaye Community → totally awesome · 2 years ago

Sorry to hear they didn't work out for you. These performed extremely well in our waterproofing tests 3 years running (see image with the boots immersed in a bucket of ice water).

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



grant_cook · 2 years ago

Did they look at any Danner products? I have a friend who was a Marine who swears by them..

He was deployed to Afghanistan in a front line role, so wearing them there gives him a lot of credibility..

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



tony kaye Community → grant_cook · 2 years ago

I don't believe we did, but there's always next winter!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Matt4109 · 2 years ago

Great article, but shouldn't this be on the sweethome instead of the wirecutter?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



tony kaye Community → Matt4109 · 2 years ago

We post some personal items like boots, rain jackets & umbrellas on The Wirecutter side, then cross-post on Sweethome :)

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



subotai1 · 2 years ago

No Lowa, No Asolo TPS? I have worn Asolo through 20 years of Minnesota winters and mountaineering. Best Active winter boots out there.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



tony kaye Community → subotai1 · 2 years ago

Asolo TPS are lower top hiking boots. But thanks for the suggestions!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Mihir → tony kaye · a year ago

is there a hiking/trekking boots comparison coming anytime soon?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Bronwyn · 2 years ago

This year I have tried a two-pairs strategy. I need tall, warm boots for deep snow, and waterproof boots for slush. So far it is going ok. The Columbia Minx boots are very warm, easy to lace, and comfortable, but NOT waterproof, not at all! The classic Bogs winter boot is, so far, quite waterproof, but not that warm and must be worn with woolly socks. Virtually nothing allows for wide calves either.

I wish there was a tall boot that actually worked. I'm up in Canada, so high snowbanks and -30C days are routine for part of the winter. Tall boots are very practical here, because they protect you from cold and snow and dirt. While we're dreaming, can it also come in wide calf versions?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Stephan Mantler → Bronwyn · a year ago

I live in Iceland, so I share your feelings. I have had great success using the Viking Icefighter; very warm, waterproof, high, good traction on frozen ground. Sadly it appears that this model is discontinued (or perhaps they just changed the website for the summer lineup), but they are definitely a brand worth looking into.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Iwoy · 2 years ago

Thanks for the updated list! Can you all request L.L. Bean send their original duck boots (shearling; goretex/thinsulate) for review? I understand their sizing is a can be erratic, but I'd like to see how they compare too.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Goposaur · 2 years ago

Any recs for someone with Hallux rigidus - need a stiff sole, like ski boot stiff.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



tony kaye Community → Goposaur · 2 years ago

Strange you should mention as a few readers have mentioned how incredibly stiff the sole/ankle area is on our pick

<http://thewirecutter.com/re...>

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Smith Doubet · 2 years ago

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