

2022 GEAR GUIDE

BACKCOUNTRY

THE UNTRACKED EXPERIENCE



Wild Rides

36 EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS
**FROM A TEST
LIKE NO OTHER**

153 SKIS, SPLITBOARDS, BOOTS,
BINDINGS & ACCESSORIES

HOW THE PANDEMIC
UPENDED SUPPLY & DEMAND

5 INNOVATIVE BRANDS
BUILDING BETTER GEAR





SCOTT SPORTS SUPERGUIDE FREETOURL

\$850 · SCOTT-SPORTS.COM · 136/105/124
3220g (185) · LENGTHS: 169, 178, 185

Scott introduced their new Superguide line last year to significant fanfare—including an Editors' Choice Award for the 95-underfoot version. The skis returned to our test unchanged, save for a new glossy topsheet for improved durability.

"Really fun do-it-all ski," a Tahoe tester wrote. "Solid on edge, solid underfoot. At home in all conditions." One Kirkwood-based tester, who skied the Freetour after a two-foot storm cycle—inbounds and touring—found them highly predictable in all types of snow: "Definitely trustworthy in the backcountry." In the Tetons a tester noted they "handle soft crud extremely well." "Plowed through crud and slush with ease," a Wasatch skier reported after a warm spring day. "They didn't hold a tight edge on hardpack, though."

The shape and layout of the Superguide Freetour (and its narrower companions) makes a major departure from that of Scott's previous backcountry-focused skis, whether under the Superguide name or their Powd'Air predecessors. The Freetour is touring-centric with a wispy paulownia core. It's stiffened by three beech stringers and reinforced with carbon and aramid, both strong synthetic fibers, that run the ski's entire length. Full sidewalls seek to enhance power transfer while the sidecut's multiple radii aim to please with snappy and hook-free turn initiation.

"A real pleasure to have this kind of performance in a touring ski," a Tahoe tester concluded. "Quiver of one—this ski will do it all. Scott has really figured it out."

We Also Tested: The Freetour's narrower counterparts are the Superguide 95 (\$800, 130/95/115) and 95 W (\$800, 128/94/113), both of which are decidedly more lightweight than all mountain. "Fun little whip," one tester said of the W. Of the unisex 95, one called it a "candidate for uphill fitness skinning and spring corn."

DPS PAGODA TOUR 100 RP

\$1,299 · DPSSKIS.COM · 132/100/117
2960g (179) · LENGTHS: 153, 163, 171, 179, 184

Understanding the naming configurations of DPS skis requires the skier's equivalent of the Rosetta Stone. But the concept behind the Pagoda Tour 100 RP is simple: This is DPS's lightest construction (Pagoda Tour) in their most utilitarian width (100) with their classic rockered and tapered shape (RP). Too long/didn't read? This ski is DPS's most versatile, lightweight tourer.

DPS overhauled their construction last year, and the resulting concepts go by the names Pagoda, Pagoda Piste and Pagoda Tour, the latter being the lightest and relying on paulownia and ash that's mated with aerospace-grade foam and layered between carbon laminates. DPS now pours the skis' sidewall materials into the mold—rather than pressing it—creating less waste and, they say, a more unified construction.

The Pagoda Tour 100 RP pleased testers equally on frozen groomers in Steamboat and in new snow in Montana. "Maneuverable with a strong preference for short turns; they're very quick edge to edge, especially for its 100-millimeter waist," found one Colorado tester. "I was pleased with the high-speed performance and experienced no chatter," wrote another.

"I skied them in a variety of conditions (windboard, fresh snow, a steep couloir), and I found myself getting more and more comfortable as the day went on," a Montana skier reported. Another appreciated how the tip rocker and taper aided in breaking trail, before stating, "I kept pushing the accelerator, cranking faster turns between tighter trees, and the float, responsiveness and confidence had me giggling."

Last winter, DPS began selling pre-cut Pomoca skins with a proprietary aluminum tail clip designed for DPS tails. And they plan to release a line of tech bindings this autumn sourced from ATK, the Italian manufacturer of many Backcountry-favorite bindings.

OGSO COUTURIER 100

\$800 · OGSO-MOUNTAIN-ESSENTIALS.COM · 135/104/120
2900g (178) · LENGTHS: 162, 170, 178, 186, 194

Chamonix-based OGSO built their Couturier 100 to be a reliable ski for all conditions. After testing these planks on both coasts, our testers confirmed these European-designed boards befit their town of origin.

"They had more of a pop to them than any other ski I have tested," a Green Mountain skier commented. "It was very playful and poppy while still maintaining a stable platform that allows it to rip." A California tester agreed: "Energetic and ready to rip...light for the uphill, predictable and playful on the down."

Peeling back the colorful topsheets reveals layers of tech, specifically a paulownia core sandwiched between two layers of multiaxial fibers that mix carbon, aramid and glass. A rubber foil surrounding the core and a dampening heel shock in the tail seek to keep chatter down, and full ABS sidewalls push power to the edges. "A good earn-your-turns minigolf ski," said an East Coaster. "It struck a nice balance of light weight but not too light, so you still feel like you'll land P-tex-side down."

Many testers complimented the sidecut's ability to hold an edge in variable conditions. Said one, "This offering from OGSO blew any expectations out of the water." He noted that the long camber underfoot and gradual, high nosed tip was just what he was looking for on a long spring tour in variable conditions: "The Couturier was speedy on the way up and like riding a lightning bolt through turns on the way down. The speed and ease with which the ski pivots and changes directions in soft snow never stopped surprising me."



RMU APOSTLE 106 TOUR

\$1,099 · RMUOUTDOORS.COM · 140/106/133
3345g (184) · LENGTHS: 176, 184

RMU's Apostle series is now available in three new constructions: a popular and beech "Wood," a titanal-reinforced "Pro," and a lightweight "Tour." The bulk of the core in the latter is paulownia and poplar, while sturdier beech sits underfoot. Fiberglass combines with reinforced aerospace-grade carbon to boost torsional rigidity while maintaining fore/aft flex. All three versions use a five-point sidecut to create a longer effective edge. "Good, solid underfoot feel in an elegant camber profile so you can step on the gas and hold a turn," a tester said.

We Also Tested: RMU's Apostle 3.0 96 Tour (\$1099, 134/96/120) shares the 106's construction in a narrower package and is, per one tester, "equally playful and smooth in a whole host of conditions."

4FRNT RAVEN W/ 4-LOCK

\$829 (WITH SKINS) · 4FRNT.COM · 121/104/112
3400g (184) · LENGTHS: 170, 177, 184, 190

4FRNT's new 4-Lock technology utilizes a small hole—dubbed the Hoji Hole—that lies 20 centimeters forward of the ski's tail through which a skin's tail clip passes to eliminate the possibility of slipping. We tested the new system on 4FRNT's designated touring ski, the Raven, which utilizes 4FRNT's Reflect Tech rocker profile, incorporating a raised tip for easy trail breaking and powder flotation while still providing ample sidecut for carving. "The rare all-mountain ski that doesn't sacrifice personality for versatility," said one tester.

"Surprisingly aggressive for how light they were on the downhill." Another called them "a real skier's ski," before praising the weight-saving and innovative skin-retention system.

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT HELIO CARBON 104

\$880 · BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM
131/104/118 · 2900g (178) · LENGTHS: 166, 172, 178, 184

Though the 104 is the middle child of Black Diamond's Helio line, she doesn't suffer from middle-child syndrome. "All-star performer!" raved one tester. "There's no way these are 104 underfoot—nimble and quick-turning, effortlessly able to rail turns of all sizes across the spectrum with the solid, unflappable edge control and confidence of a finely-dialed sports car." The 104 shares the same construction as the other members of the Helio family—engineered paulownia core, pre-preg carbon fiber, ABS sidewalls and a titanal mounting plate—but packages it in a mid-fat width that one tester called "a hard-charging foot rocket and a forgiving do-it-all quiver of one."

OGSO DIABLE 100

\$700 · OGSO-MOUNTAIN-ESSENTIALS.COM
135/104/120 · 4200g (178)
LENGTHS: 162, 170, 178, 186, 194

The Diable is the more downhill-oriented version of the Editors' Choice Couturier 100, with slightly less camber underfoot and a sturdier build that employs poplar instead of paulownia and adds basalt fibers to the mix of carbon, glass and aramid. The result is a bit more weight but a powerhouse on the way down. Testers across the spectrum applauded the Diable, with a larger male tester out of Tahoe calling them, "Really fun little pow pigs. Very progressive feel and forward initiation point on the ski." In Vermont, a smaller female agreed, "Incredible ability to initiate turns. The Diable seemed intuitive to all my needs in the changing conditions of a long spring weekend at Smugglers' Notch."