

# Gear of the Year: the winners

Welcome to the results of the biggest hill-walking gear test ever conducted.

We can tell a lot about how good walking gear really is using our professional testers and lab research. You can read the results in **Trail** every month. But when it comes to the ins and outs of life on the hill long-term, nobody puts gear through its paces like the biggest test team in the business: Team **Trail**.

That's why this autumn we asked you to rate your gear for performance, build quality and value for money in the first annual Gear of the Year survey. Here you see the overall winners – those products whose scores across all three criteria averaged highest. Think of this page as the ultimate no-risk shopping list. Turn over to see how all the top scorers compare in detail. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of your money went into this test. The results are worth listening to...

RESEARCH BY SIMON MOORE

## THE BEST-LOVED PRODUCT IN BRITAIN

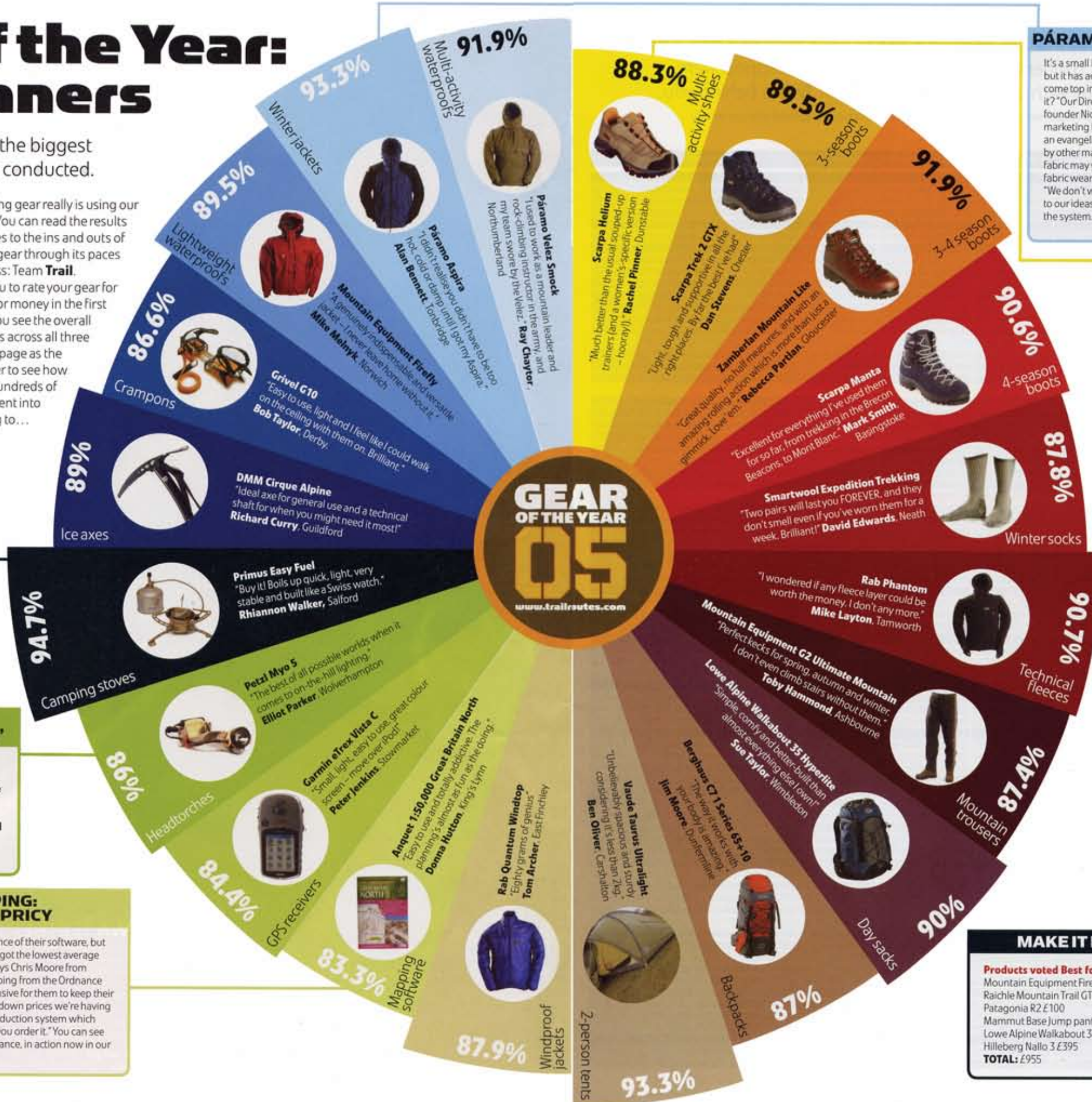
If you want to experience customer satisfaction, you'd best get one of these. The Primus Easy Fuel stove got the highest overall rating of any product in the survey – an astonishing 94.7%, including a near-perfect 97.3% rating for build quality. But it seems perfection's not good enough for Primus. Since our survey they've updated and improved the Easy Fuel and renamed it the Gravity EF. It's even lighter, lower and more stable than before. Could we see our first 100% rated product in 2006?

## 'VOTING FOR THIS WON ME A TRIP TO KILI!'

Ellen Cameron is the lucky winner of the trip to climb Kilimanjaro with The Adventure Company in 2006 – all because of her Myo 5. "It's so much better than other headtorches I've had, and I wanted to tell people!" Rate your gear next year and this could be you...

## DIGITAL MAPPING: GREAT BUT TOO PRICY

Owners of digital mapping love the performance of their software, but they're decidedly lukewarm about the price. It got the lowest average value for money score of all categories. But, says Chris Moore from Anquet, prices are falling: "Licensing the mapping from the Ordnance Survey costs a lot because it's incredibly expensive for them to keep their database accurate and up to date. So to bring down prices we're having to do things like moving to an on-demand production system which means your CD-ROM is only made on the day you order it." You can see Memory-Map software, rated top for performance, in action now in our Routes section now – from page 86.



## PÁRAMO PUNCHES ABOVE ITS WEIGHT

It's a small British company with a unique approach to waterproofing, but it has aced some of the biggest multinationals in the business to come top in two Gear of the Year categories. So how does Páramo do it? "Our Directional Clothing System simply works really well," says founder Nick Brown. "It's what we use instead of a multi-million pound marketing budget. Everyone who buys into Páramo just becomes an evangelist for the brand." Originally pitched as a fabric to be used by other manufacturers, Páramo's animal fur-mimicking Directional fabric may yet outgrow the Páramo brand: "Expect to see Directional fabric wearing other manufacturers' logos within 2-3 years," says Nick. "We don't want to be the Apple Mac of the outdoor world and hold on to our ideas really tightly – we want the whole market to benefit from the system." Results like this prove they deserve it.

## MULTI-ACTIVITY SHOES: MUST TRY HARDER

A great result for Scarpa's Helium shoes, but overall this is the lowest-scoring category in the survey. What's gone wrong? Mark Taylor of the Performance Clothing Research Group reckons he has the answer. "The due's in the name" he says. "They might as well be called jack-of-all-trades-master-of-none shoes. They're great for hanging around in; but as soon as you ask them to do something specific like running, scrambling or hill-walking, you realise how little overlap there is in the features you need for each. They're not as supportive as boots, not as light as running shoes and not as grippy as scrambling boots. That's why most manufacturers farm production out to the same big factories in China, knowing performance isn't what most users demand."

## INSTANT WARDROBES!

If you're on a budget but aren't prepared to compromise on your hill gear, minted and demand top performance at any price, or simply want everything you buy to last forever, use the Gear of the Year results to come up with shopping lists for your hill kit staples: below are three examples for 3-season walking wardrobes; use the chart over the page to come up with more.

## MONEY-NO-OBJECT

**Products voted Best for performance**  
**Lightweight waterproof:** Montane Superfly £175  
**3-season boots:** Scarpa Trek 2 GTX £130  
**Technical fleece:** Rab Phantom £120  
**Mountain trousers:** Mountain Equipment G2 Ultimate Pant £130  
**Day sack:** Lowe Alpine Walkabout 35 Hyperlite £50  
**Tent:** Hilleberg Nallo 2 £395  
**TOTAL:** £1,000

## MAKE IT LAST

**Products voted Best for build quality**  
 Mountain Equipment Firefly £180  
 Raichle Mountain Trail GTX £130  
 Patagonia R2 £100  
 Mammut Base Jump pant £100  
 Lowe Alpine Walkabout 35 Hyperlite £50  
 Hilleberg Nallo 3 £395  
**TOTAL:** £955

## WHY PAY MORE?

**Products voted Best value**  
 Lowe Alpine Alpine Light £170  
 Brasher Trailmaster £120  
 Rab Phantom £120  
 Mountain Equipment G2 Ultimate Pant £130  
 Vango Air Canyon 30+5 £45  
 Vaude Taurus Ultralight £210  
**TOTAL:** £795