

walk  
READER  
Awards

2009

# Top gear

The results are in! After months of voting for your favourite kit, retailers and destinations, outdoor expert and avid industry-watcher **Cameron McNeish** announces the winners of the 2009 **walk** Reader Awards



## Best walking boot/shoe

**GOLD:** Brasher  
**SILVER:** Meindl and Scarpa  
Congratulations to Brasher for creeping up from second last year to take the top spot. My old friend the late Chris Brasher, who pioneered the concept of lightweight walking boots in the UK, would have been thrilled. It's very encouraging to see a British company taking top spot ahead of two European manufacturers.

## Best walking trouser

**GOLD:** Craghoppers  
**SILVER:** Rohan  
**BRONZE:** Paramo  
The same three runners as last year but well done to Craghoppers, taking the top spot ahead of last year's winner, Rohan. I wonder if that's anything to do with the fact that Craghoppers gear is now widely available in TK Maxx? I've bought some outdoor gear from TK Maxx myself and, in these tough economic times, we all want bargains. Like Rohan, Craghoppers has moved away from the general outdoors into the travel market with great success.



## Best base layer

**GOLD:** Helly Hansen  
**SILVER:** Berghaus and Icebreaker  
Aha! The first appearance of a newer company. New Zealand's Icebreaker uses Merino wool for their base layers and while wool undies were popular decades ago, they have made a real comeback in recent years in their new non-scratchy incarnation. But it's the old Norwegian sailing and outdoor gear favourite Helly Hansen at number one.



## Best backpack/rucksack

**GOLD:** Berghaus  
**SILVER:** Karrimor  
**BRONZE:** Lowe Alpine  
The three 'usual suspects' of UK pack manufacturers. They finished in this order last year too, so congratulations to each of them for holding out against overseas competition. It's a shame though there's no room for Deuter, The North Face, Go-Lite, Osprey and Gregory, which all make very fine daypacks.



## Best walking sock

**GOLD:** Bridgedale  
**SILVER:** Brasher  
**BRONZE:** Thorlo  
Bridgedale should be given a special award since this is the fifth year running that **walk** readers have named its walking sock as their favourite. That's a tremendous accolade and, as I've suggested in the past, it could well be down to Bridgedale's excellent marketing and availability. That's not to take anything away from the fact they make great socks too!



## Best waterproof jacket

**GOLD:** Berghaus  
**SILVER:** Paramo  
**BRONZE:** The North Face  
Well done to Berghaus for holding on to the top spot. The North Face replaces Lowe Alpine in the rankings and I'd love to know why. Berghaus, The North Face and Lowe Alpine all use Gore-Tex fabrics, whereas Paramo's Directional Clothing System is unique - breathable and very waterproof but heavier than Gore-Tex garments.



## Best fleece

**GOLD:** Berghaus  
**SILVER:** The North Face  
**BRONZE:** Paramo  
Is there a link between waterproofs and fleeces? Do **walk** readers buy fleeces that zip into particular waterproof jackets? I ask because you've given the top three places in both categories to the same companies. I'm also intrigued that The North Face has entered the fray at the expense of Low Alpine, again in both categories.



## Best GPS

**GOLD:** Garmin  
**SILVER:** Satmap  
**BRONZE:** Magellan  
Satmap leapfrog Magellan into second place from last year. That's probably due to its excellent Active 10GPS unit that doesn't have to be plugged into a computer. You simply stick in a 'map card' from one of 150 covering the whole of the UK at both 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scales. Both Garmin and Magellan are very much industry leaders though, despite me suspecting they were both taking their eye off the walking sector in favour of in-car units. Perhaps I was wrong!