

Best Backpack/Rucksack

**1ST BERGHAUS 2ND KARRIMOR
3RD LOWE ALPINE**

These three companies are almost generic names for packs. Each started out life as pack manufacturers (Karrimor began by making cycle panniers) and over the years have been at the forefront of pack design in the UK. Having said that, I'd dare suggest that each of them have lagged behind their American rivals in recent years, particularly in the area of lightweight packs. Because of the strong mountaineering heritage we have in the UK, a great deal of our gear, particularly packs, is designed with climbers and mountaineers in mind, whereas the Americans have more of a backpacking tradition. That's why their packs tend to suit walkers more. However, Berghaus have certainly grasped the lightweight concept and their latest range of walkers' packs includes some pretty impressive models.



**1ST NEW ZEALAND 2ND FRANCE
3RD AUSTRIA**

Here's another curious result. Perhaps you are all fanatical *Lord of the Rings* fans or the rise in carbon gas emissions is coming from all you **walk** readers travelling to the other side of the world for your walking holidays. France and Austria are certainly more accessible destinations and I can well understand their popularity. One of my favourite backpacking routes is the magnificent Tour du Mont Blanc, which starts and finishes in Chamonix in France and also visits Switzerland and Italy. In Austria there is some superb walking in the Zugspitze Alps, the Austrian Tyrol and in the Austrian Lake District around Salzburg.

Best Overall Brand

1ST BERGHAUS 2ND PÁRAMO 3RD ROHAN

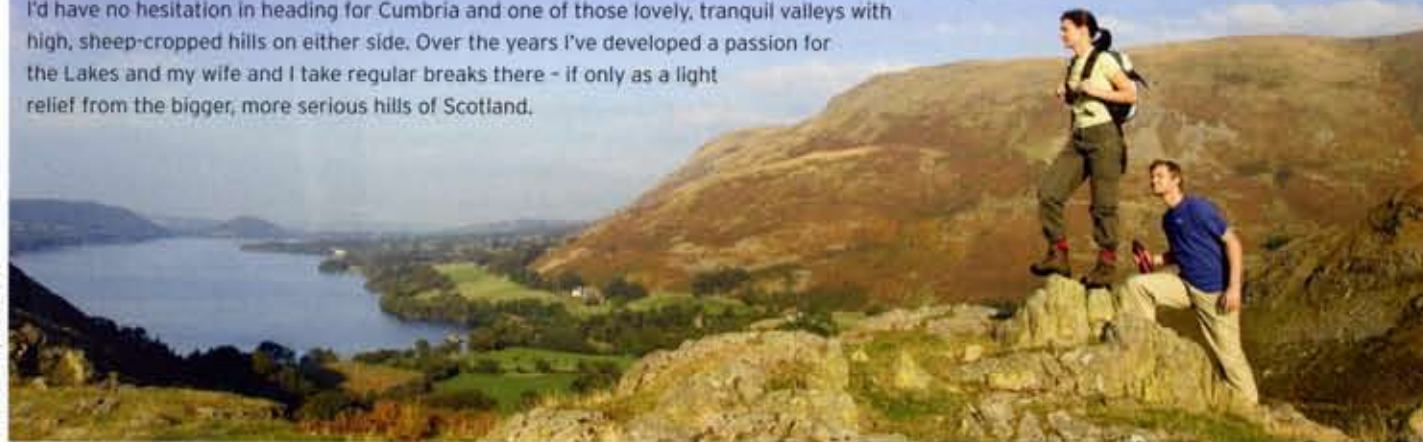
I've been really intrigued by all these results and I wonder what's behind them. Good marketing? Availability of the products? The pedigree of the company? Or do these companies simply make the best gear for walkers? It's interesting to see Rohan stake a claim in the top three. In recent years their efforts have been in the travel market so I wonder how many of you use Rohan clothing as a kind of 'lifestyle' brand. Páramo is a much more technical and practical range of clothing and there is no doubt that the gear works exactly as it says on the package. Every year I see more and more Páramo products in use on the hill, and every Páramo user I know swears by the products. It's a good, green, ethical company too, so all power to them, Berghaus has appeared in four of the gear categories this year so perhaps it's not surprising that they're voted best overall brand. I was at the press launch of Berghaus' new ranges for this year and I'm sure it will keep the North East company at the top of the tree for a few more years yet.



Best Walking Destination in Britain

1ST LAKE DISTRICT 2ND SCOTLAND 3RD WALES AND ISLE OF MAN

Mmm, I'm disappointed in you lot! Scotland in second place? You obviously haven't travelled far enough north. And how come the Isle of Man edges ahead of areas like the Peak District, Yorkshire and the South West - traditional walkers' hotspots? I'm intrigued. But well done Lake District. I have to admit that if the Scottish government ever decided to kick me out of the country, I'd have no hesitation in heading for Cumbria and one of those lovely, tranquil valleys with high, sheep-cropped hills on either side. Over the years I've developed a passion for the Lakes and my wife and I take regular breaks there - if only as a light relief from the bigger, more serious hills of Scotland.



Britain on View/Rod Edwards

Best GPS



1ST GARMIN 2ND MAGELLAN 3RD SATMAP
Satmap are the newcomers here and their Active 10 GPS unit has had a hugely successful launch. The maps are supplied on map cards that simply plug straight into the Active 10 - you don't need a computer or any other equipment! Over 150 map titles are available, covering the whole of Great Britain at 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scales. It's an impressive unit. Having said that, both Garmin and Magellan are undoubted market leaders, so it doesn't surprise me to see their names as numbers one and two. Other than that I can't tell you too much about GPS units - afraid I'm one of the old farts who much prefer to use a traditional map and compass, although the new Satmap unit could get me excited...



Best Online Retailer

1ST COTSWOLD 2ND FIELD & TREK 3RD GO OUTDOORS



COTSWOLD
we get outdoors

I remember Field & Trek starting their business over 30 years ago as a mail-order company. In those days they were at the sharp end of the mail-order business, so it doesn't surprise me that they have a strong online presence today. The same goes for Cotswold, a company that appears to be getting stronger and stronger, bigger and bigger.

Go Outdoors is a relative newcomer to the industry but their website is impressive. One to watch for the future, I think!

Best Indie Retailer

**1ST TISO 2ND COTSWOLD
3RD CUNNINGHAM, FIELD & TREK
AND ROHAN**

I'd love to know the definition of an independent retailer because I'd make the claim that Tiso, Cotswold, Field & Trek and Rohan are all chain stores. I had this discussion recently with Chris Tiso who, correctly, made the claim that Tiso was still a family-owned concern even though they have over a dozen outlets. So it's rather interesting to see Stewart Cunningham, a true independent, make it in there with the big boys. A special congratulations is due to him.



Best High Street Retailer

**1ST MILLETS 2ND BLACKS 3RD
COTSWOLD**

I've suggested once or twice that **walk** readers are probably traditionalists, and I think this result bears me out. Millets and Blacks are two of the oldest names in outdoors retailing and, of course, Millets is a staunch supporter of the Ramblers' Association. Cotswold is no youngster either, although I suspect that their growth in the high street in recent years has made them much more accessible to shoppers. However, a considerable number of Millets branches have closed in the last year, so it will be interesting to see if they can hold on to their top spot next year.



Walking Hero of the Year

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NICHOLAS CRANE

Walking hero of the year! What have we come to? Has the celebrity cult entered the down-to-earth, pragmatic world of walking? I know for a fact that Nick Crane would grimace in embarrassment at this label. But at least **walk** readers have plumped for a true adventurer and a very good broadcaster, (even though he has a thing about antique umbrellas), and not one of the new breed of television personalities who are dragged up hills with little real appreciation of what they are doing. Nick was one of my guests when I made the *Wilderness Walks* series for the BBC about a decade ago, and a finer hill companion you couldn't hope to meet.



CAMERON McNEISH

is the editor of *TGO Magazine*, vice-president of Ramblers Scotland and a regular broadcaster, making many outdoor programmes for television. He lives in the shadow of the Cairngorms and regularly travels abroad each year collecting material for magazine articles and his popular audio-visual presentations. He is also president of the Backpackers Club, a trustee of the Wilderness Foundation and chairman of the Nevis Partnership.