

Best Waterproof Jacket



PARAMO
2 BERGHAUS 3 LOWE ALPINE

Paramo rises from second last year to first, showing that you really appreciate the comfort of these unusual garments that don't have a coating or a membrane and so are far more breathable than other waterproofs. The fabric is softer, quieter and more flexible, too. Indeed, I don't feel like I'm wearing a waterproof when I have a Paramo jacket on. Paramo makes waterproofs in a wide range of designs, including the new traditional country-style Pajaro jacket, which is quite long and has excellent pockets. A donation to the charity Trees For Life is made for every Pajaro sold.



Best Base Fleece



BERGHAUS
2 PARAMO 3 LOWE ALPINE

Berghaus rules the fleece world again, coming first for the third year running. As Berghaus makes every type of fleece from thin lightweight microfleece to heavy windproof, all in a variety of styles and in top quality fabrics, the company can supply whatever you require. Fleece is exceptionally long lasting and I wouldn't be surprised if it's the garment least often replaced. I expect you are all voting for fleeces you've had for several years. Paramo coming second is a surprise, as they only make a few rather unusual fleece garments and they weren't in the list at all last year.

I guess those who like their waterproofs have been looking at the rest of the range.



Best Walking Sock



BRIDGEDALE
2 THORLO
3 SMART WOOL

The voting here is exactly as last year with Bridgedale keeping its top spot for the third year running. One reason for this is probably that Bridgedale socks are very durable. I have pairs I wear regularly that are several years old and just won't wear out! Bridgedale achieves this durability by blending wool with nylon so that the former is protected from wear by the latter. Bridgedale socks are comfortable over a wide range of temperatures, too. Different models have varying mixes of materials and different densities of padding to deal with varying temperatures.



Best Guide Book



CICERONE
2 LONELY PLANET
3 JARROLD

Top for the third year, Cicerone's range of excellent guidebooks continues to expand. Latest offerings include Peter Hermon's two-volume *Hillwalking in Wales*, which covers every 2,000-foot summit in the principality, and Graham Uney's *Backpacker's Britain - Northern Scotland*, which covers 30 multi-day walks. Forthcoming titles include Andy Robinson's *The End to End Trail*, which describes a 2,000km route from Land's End to John O'Groats that sounds exciting. I needed a book like that when I did an End to End walk. There are also books on various alpine routes, *The Cumbria Coastal Way*, *Walking in Kent*, *The Pentland Hills*, and many more areas to come.



Best GPS



GARMIN
2 MAGELLAN
3 SILVA

Garmin stay top for the third year, showing that it's still the market leader with a wide choice of GPS units suitable for walking.

Garmin's basic eTrex and Geko units are some of the lightest and easiest to use. If you want to do more technical stuff, the more advanced eTrex units and the GPSMap series have removable microSD cards to which you can download maps.

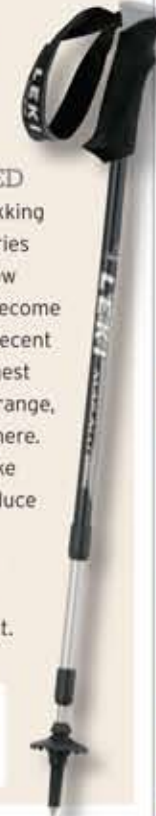


Best Walking Accessory



LEKI
WALKING POLE
2 SILVA
COMPASS
3 MAGLITE LED

Leki was number one in the trekking pole category last year and carries that popularity over into this new category. Trekking poles have become the most popular accessory in recent years and Leki is by far the biggest name in poles, with the largest range, so it's not a shock to see them here. Trekking poles really do help take the weight off your legs and reduce stress on your hips and knees, but only if you know how to use them properly, which, from my observations, many people don't.



Back Pack/Rucksack



KARRIMOR
2 BERGHAUS
3 LOWE ALPINE

This is two categories rolled into one. In 2006, Karrimor was first in the over 30 litre pack category and second in the under 30 litre, with Berghaus in the converse positions. Karrimor has had a revival of late, with its rucksacks reappearing in many outlets. I suspect, though, that many of you are voting for your old rucksacks. If you're thinking of changing brands, Karrimor has some interesting new ones, including the lightweight 45 litre Vapour and 50 litre Ether models.



Best Overall Brand



BERGHAUS 2 PARAMO 3 REGATTA

Berghaus was your favourite brand last year too, and also came top in four categories (waterproof jackets, fleece, base layers, daysacks). This year, Berghaus is top in only two categories (fleece and base layers) so maybe its hold on the top is slipping just a little. It does appear in five categories though (backpacks and waterproofs, as well as fleece and base layers and this one) - more than any other brand. Although it likes to project an image as a tough mountaineering company, Berghaus products are ideal for walking and the company deserves to be a favourite.



Best High Street Retailer



MILLETS 2 BLACKS 3 COTSWOLDS

Last year when Millets won this category, I commented that it wasn't surprising as they had 270 stores nationwide so everyone had one not far away. More have opened since then and there are now over 280. Back in 1893, when the company was founded by Mr JM Millet, there were just two stores, in Bristol and Southampton. Millets is also a supporter of the Ramblers' Association and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.



Best Destination UK



LAKE DISTRICT 2 SNOWDONIA 3 SCOTLAND

I'd have been surprised if the Lake District hadn't come top again in this category. I think some areas of the Scottish Highlands match it in beauty and walking opportunities, but these are less accessible and less well known. I'm sure there are walk readers who will vigorously defend Snowdonia, the Peak District, the Yorkshire Dales and other areas as being the best UK walking destination, too. Let's be thankful we have such choice in our small country.