Outdoor Gear For Your Summer Fun

by Scott_Staats

Summer is here and that means hiking, camping, birding and other fun outdoor activities. Having the right gear will help make your outdoor experiences more fun and more memorable. Here are a few of my top picks.

ALPEN 788 SPOTTING SCOPE: Photo by S. Staats ALPEN 788 SPOTTING SCOPE

Whether youâ€™re birdwatching, wildlife watching or just sightseeing, thereâ€™s only one piece of gear better than a pair of binoculars and thatâ€™s a spotting scope. My pick is Alpenâ€™s new 788 spotting scope. It has all the cool features of high-end optics except for one thingâ€¦itâ€™s affordable. Iâ€™ve compared this scope with other top brands three times the price and found it very comparable.

The 20-60x80 scope has a 45-degree eyepiece, is waterproof/fog proof, has multi-coated lenses, crisp clear resolution and comes with a small adjustable metal tabletop tripod and nylon field case. The suggested retail price is $475. Alpen also has a variety of other spotting scopes, rifle scopes and binoculars. Their products have been rated Best Buys from Outdoor Life Magazine four times. Contact Alpen at 877-987-8370 or go to www.alpenoutdoor.com. Alpen products are also available at Sportsmanâ€™s Warehouse in Bend.

12-LED LANTERN: Photo by S. Staats 12-LED LANTERN

There are three things I donâ€™t like about most lanterns. First off, they have the ability to blind you and everyone else around the table or in the tent. Second, the heat from the lantern attracts bugs and can burn you. And third, they use gas and produce fumes. The 12-LED Lantern by Essential Gear has taken care of all these problems.

The 12 ultra-bright LEDs put out more than enough light to read by, play cards or prepare a meal around camp. The On/Off control knob acts as a dimmer switch to adjust brightness. LEDs produce virtually no heat so insects arenâ€™t attracted to them compared with most incandescent lights, and thereâ€™s no chance of burning yourself. The energy efficient LED bulbs last over 100,000 hours. The four â€œDâ€• size batteries (not included) have a total burn time of over 12 days on low setting or up to 40 hours on the brightest setting.

The lantern has a water-resistant case and a built-in hanging handle for easy use around camp. At only about nine inches high with a 4.5-inch base diameter, the lantern weighs just 2.5 pounds with batteries. The

adjustable brightness control allows you to easily raise or lower the lighting level of the 12 white LEDs.

The lantern retails for $50. To order, call Essential Gear at 800-582-3861 or visit www.essentialgear.com.

COLEMAN FOLD 'N GO STOVE: Photo by S. Staats COLEMAN FOLD â€™N GO STOVE

My favorite camp stoves have always been from Coleman. Their latest stove just out on the market is one of the most innovative Iâ€™ve seen yet. Although itâ€™s called the Fold â€˜N Go, it could have been called the Coleman Clamshell.

The stove resembles a big red clamshell with a black handle. When opened, it turns into a really cool looking two-burner stove. The burners are spaced 13 inches apart to allow for use of large skillets and pots. Push-button ignition allows for easy, matchless lighting. The stove operates on one 16.4 ounce propane cylinder, which can be found at most outdoor retailers.

The Fold â€˜N Go is about 25 percent more compact than traditional two-burner stoves for easier carrying or stowing. The burners are rated at 10,000 BTUâ€™s each and are fully adjustable from simmer to full-throttle boiling and frying.

The regulator/ fuel cylinder attachment stores neatly inside the stove when closed and attaches to the back of the stove when in use. Aluminized steel cooking surfaces make for easy clean-up. Chrome-plated heavy-gauge wire grates provide stable supports for a variety of pot and pan sizes.

This is one cook stove youâ€™ll want to have in camp or just out for a picnic or patio cookout. The stove retails for $70. Contact Coleman at 800-835-3278 or visit www.coleman.com.

HI-TEC HIKING BOOTS: Photo by Hi-Tec HI-TEC HIKING BOOTS Now is the time to start thinking about getting into some hiking boots and getting out and about. But it seems there are about as many choices of boots as there are hiking trails.

My favorite brand over the years has been Hi-Tec. Whether I choose a 10-mile hike or just a short jaunt up in the Ochocos, they have the right boot for the right outing.

One boot I recommend is the MultiTerra Mid Hi-Tecâ€™s most supportive multi-sport shoe for hiking and mountain biking. It provides the lightweight (about 15 ounces), flexible comfort of a running shoe plus the sure-footedness of a rugged hiking boot. A durable carbon rubber outsole provides superior wear and grip.

The MultiTerra Mid retails for $65 (waterproof version for $75) and is available at www.hi-tec.com.

Scott Staats is a fulltime outdoor writer who has lived in Central Oregon the last ten years. His articles have appeared in local, regional, and national publications.

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