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Rise Of The Rentals

As skiers travel more to distant mountains, the gear rental market is booming to keep up.

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Carolyn Webber Alder

Updated December 3, 2024 01:56PM



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Editor's Note: This story originally ran in the inaugural issue of [The Voice](#) from our sister publication [SNEWS](#) for the 2019 Outdoor Retailer Snow Show. You can request your free, full copy of The Voice [here](#).



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The Ten Basic Commandments of Ski Rentals



While hauling his luggage out the door, Eric Derflinger ticks off each item from his mental packing list.

Jackets, pants, and gloves? Check, check, check. Skis and poles? A split second of panic, then he remembers he's renting this time around. Old habits are hard to break.

A few years ago, skis would have been the first thing Ohio-based Derflinger tossed in his car before driving to the airport for a ski trip, but hefty baggage fees have convinced him to give renting a try. Lugging gear around an airport and to the resort was always a hassle, anyway.

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He's not alone: Resort town ski shops are bursting with people renting their gear. By all accounts, the number of skiers and snowboarders hopping flights or driving across state lines in search of stoke is up, and more of those powder-hungry winter enthusiasts are leaving their gear at home. Instead, they're renting and demoing on (or near) the mountain.

Flying solo

"Rentals have been extremely successful, and increasing," says Bill Irwin, a seasoned rental manager for Elan USA Corp. In his 25 years of visiting ski shops and resorts around the U.S., he's watched the rise of rentals sweep across the industry.

Why? Convenience, for one. "I always rent when I fly," says Roddie Haley, a skier picking out demo gear at Jackson's Base Camp in Park City, Utah, one day last December. "It's a pain to take my gear with me and pay extra." With round-trip baggage charges ranging from \$100 to \$200 and a demo package of brand-new products running about \$50 a day, the math makes sense.

Jackson Knoll, owner of Jackson's Base Camp, replaces his 168 pairs of skis and boards with new products every single year.

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Nick Sargent, president of SnowSports Industries America, has been watching the trend unfold as the next generation of skiers hits the slopes.

He defines the group as “cost-savvy, time-sensitive, and technology-driven,” which translates into unique customer habits: They follow the snow and book their trips last-minute.

What’s more, skiers are increasingly purchasing multi-resort passes, allowing them access to unprecedented terrain around the globe. With Vail Resorts’ Epic Pass (access to 65 resorts) or Alterra Mountain Company’s Ikon Pass (38 resorts) in hand, trips to [Whistler Blackcomb](#), Keystone, and [Squaw Valley](#) in one season are that much more doable.

Try over buy

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There's one more reason skiers and riders, especially experienced ones, might be tempted to travel without gear: to take high-performance demos for a spin. “If they were to bring their skis, they’d only bring one pair,” says Sam Beck, director of marketing and communications for Nordica. “But if they’re renting or demoing, they can trade it in or out according to the conditions.” Skiers and riders lust after testing the latest technology, and shops are keeping up with customer demand by offering a wide selection of high-quality performance skis.

The old trope of beat-up rental skis is on the outs as ski shops, particularly at destination resorts, upgrade their rental and demo fleets more often. Jackson Knoll, owner of Jackson’s Base Camp, replaces his 168 pairs of skis and boards with new products every single year.

Jack Walzer, general manager at JANS Mountain Outfitters in Park City, has begun changing his fleet to cater to this experienced demo crowd, swapping out the novice-friendly sport skis that used to be popular for high-performance demo models. “We had about 260 sport skis a couple of years ago, and maybe 150 high-performance [packages],” Walzer says. Now, the shop maintains a more even split.

Give ‘em what they want

A subset of skiers—often city dwellers who travel once or twice a year to ski—like demoing and renting so much they’ve gone all in, choosing to demo indefinitely over purchasing their own set of skis. Industry leaders say Europe has already moved in this direction and, based on numbers, the U.S. is likely to follow.

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“It’s a steady increase in rentals balancing a steady decrease in retail,” Irwin says.

Nordica recently updated its most popular retail skis (which are increasingly used for demos) to have a thicker topsheet for added durability, Beck says, answering the call for gear that can stand up to repetitive use and continuous tuning. In the 2018-19 season, Nordica released its rental-specific ski, the Drive; the tail shape, ski width, and rocker were all designed so beginners and novices could more comfortably navigate off groomers. And in F19, the brand will launch its new boot line, the Cruise for adults and Speedmachine J3 for juniors. The boots are lighter and more comfortable, and include a dual soft flap opening to make slipping them on and off easier. Rockered heels and Gripwalk technology in the soles are aimed to improve walkability.

Elan has experimented with a new way to increase flex and maintain durability in skis. The resulting technology, called U-Flex in junior skis and Groove Technology in adult products, has lines cut into the topsheet that flex like little hinges.

This technology is in the F17 junior Explore ski and the F18 adult Element ski, which are available now for rental and retail. The bumped-up durability is breaking into the company’s rising demo market as well. “Over the last two years, we’ve doubled our performance rental market share,” Irwin says. “And this year, I think we will go higher than that.”

Demo skis have also become an increasingly important part of DPS’s sales, says spokesman Alex Hunt. The brand recently partnered with Aspen Skiing Company to provide its innovative base treatment, Phantom Permanent Waxless Glide to be used on the company’s demo fleet. Once ski shops apply the one-time treatment, they eliminate the time-consuming process of re-waxing skis and boards.

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As the travel-to-ski trend gains steam, it can’t hurt to make it easier for footloose skiers—and the shops that serve them—to rent and demo gear. And brands that embrace it might just gain the upper hand.

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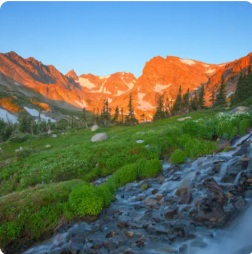


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XTRATUF Builds on Its Legacy of Performance in the Toughest Environments

The new Ankle Deck Boot Pro incorporates elements of the trusted Legacy Boot

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The new Ankle Deck Boot Pro (Photo: XTRATUF)

Brian Higgins [Follow](#)

Updated September 16, 2026 12:42PM

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Ever since the first XTRATUF boot arrived on a spray-soaked deck in Alaska more than 75 years ago, the brand has been an essential partner for those who live and work there. Now, from the icy waters of the Bering Sea to the far beyond, people all over the world turn to XTRATUF for gear that performs in harsh conditions—just like they do.

When it comes to versatility, the Ankle Deck Boot (ADB) is a trusted option for offshore anglers, professional guides, and boaters of all kinds. Its lightweight design and slip-resistant outsole are ideal for anyone who needs trusted comfort and reliable performance with the added mobility of an ankle-height boot.



And that's just the start. XTRATUF is taking the original ADB even further with the new [ADB Pro](#), an upgraded version of the boot built for those whose jobs demand their footwear to keep pace.

Embodying the Spirit of Alaska

It's not often that a brand becomes so synonymous with its environment that it becomes a staple of the local culture, but that's what happens when the harshest conditions meet the toughest gear. XTRATUF boots are found on fishing boats around the world, but nowhere more than in Alaska. Once the boots proved themselves in the frozen north, word of their reliability spread up and down the coast. Today, XTRATUF spends just as much time on land as at sea, offering footwear for hiking, camping, snow sports, and everyday outdoor life. Because if you're going to represent Alaska, you need to help people gear up for adventures in the mountains as well.

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While that durable spirit is in all of its products, the [Legacy Boot](#) is the one that put XTRATUF on the map. This is essential gear for those in the state's legendary commercial fishing industry, so much so that it's been dubbed the "Alaskan sneaker." It actually does have a sneaker-like flexibility that people love, along with durability that stands up to more than just weather. Made with triple-dipped latex neoprene, these boots create a barrier between your feet and all kinds of acids and corrosives you'll find on a commercial fishing vessel.



Ankle Deck Boot Pro XTRATUF



What does the Legacy Boot have to do with the new ADB Pro? Everything. XTRATUF used those same trusted design choices to ensure the new ADB Pro is ready for anything you—and the ocean—throw at it.

Familiar Durability in a Versatile Package

By crafting the ADB Pro with the durability of the Legacy Boot, XTRATUF aims to bring its famous balance of comfort, ruggedness, flexibility, and weather protection to even more people. The ankle height appeals to more professionals

across more industries, from offshore vessels to the paddling guides at your local rivers.

The key to the new design is XTRATUF's signature triple-dipped latex neoprene. This not only makes the ADB Pro 100% waterproof, but it also provides resistance to oils, acids, chemicals, and contaminants. That includes both organic and inorganic elements, meaning it protects against fluids from machinery and equipment as well as fish oils. When working on a boat, you don't have control over what kind of conditions you'll be exposed to, so the ADB Pro is designed to hold up no matter what. Other durability-minded features include a heavier textured foxing and added toe overlay—protecting these key areas.



The ADB Pro is crafted with the durability of the Legacy Boot. (Photo: XTRATUF)

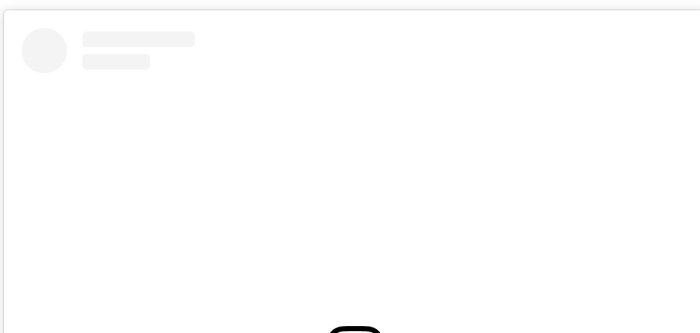
But XTRATUF didn't make its mark all those years ago just because of durability. The nonmarking chevron rubber outsole keeps a steady grip on slick decks and docks so you can tackle any task with confidence, keeping your mind on the job at hand and not your footing. The front and back pull tabs make it easy to get ready in a flash—those who get dressed in the dark will appreciate the convenience.

Comfort might be the last thing you imagine on an Alaskan fishing boat, but XTRATUF knows that when you feel your best, you work at your best. A molded BioLite footbed delivers lightweight cushioning for long hours on your feet, and an XpressCool lining helps wick away moisture to keep your feet comfortable while you work.

Trusted by the Pros

It's hard to get much closer to the water while you're working than [Emmanuel Williams](#) does. He's a member of XTRATUF's Pro Team who specializes in offshore fishing from a personal watercraft.

As you might imagine, hauling in trophy fish from a Sea-Doo requires gear that works. As Emmanuel said, "You're not on top of the water—you're in it." And it's not exactly a pleasure cruise, either. "For the majority of the trip, my boots are standing in water. On top of that, I'm constantly moving, balancing, and landing fish solo in tight spaces with no backup."





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For professionals like Emmanuel, the [ADB Pro](#) has everything they need—protection against water and weather, durability for industry-specific use, and a legacy forged in some of the toughest environments on the planet.

[XTRATUF's](#) history in commercial fishing has inspired new styles built for life on and off the boat. From commercial-grade Legacy boots to explorer-grade ADBs and Riptides, Xtratuf is Alaska Proven and Built for All.

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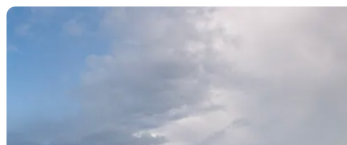
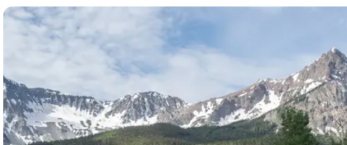
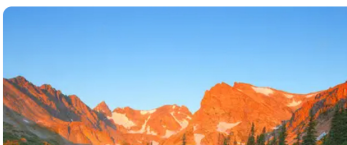


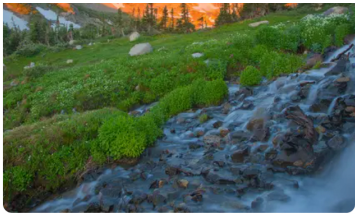
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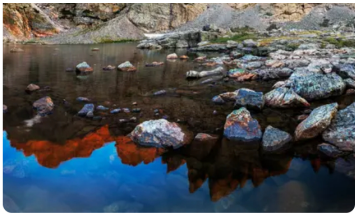
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