

[FIELD TESTED]

STICKY WICKETS

20 ROCK SHOES FOR 2007 TESTED AND RATED BY THE EDITORS

IN THE LAST TWO DECADES THE ROCK AND ICE crew has put over 450 rock shoes through their paces. During that time we've applauded the great ones, scratched our heads at the rotten models, sometimes wondering out loud if anyone prior to us had ever tried the things on. We've also developed our biases about what we do and don't like.

This year we tried things a bit differently. We climbed in the latest models, as per usual, but polled you, our readers to see what *you* like. The response was overwhelming—and surprising. For instance, we thought that resoling, like using a pay phone, had been all but eradicated, but 59 percent of you said you still send your shoes in for a retread (two percent do it yourselves). We were also agape to learn that most of you own four pairs of shoes, and that 78 percent of you climb 40 days or more per year ... which makes us wonder how you swing so much time off.

Not surprisingly, 74 percent of you said you will buy a new pair of shoes this year, and 37 percent say you'll *never* switch brands. For the shoe itself, 40 percent of you use a sport model most often, and slightly more get better use out of an all-rounder. Over three quarters of you say that rubber makes a critical difference, and that you prefer a shoe with a moderate curve and a medium-stiff sole. Finally, you said that next to fit, *Rock and Ice's* rock-shoe recommendations were the most influential factor when you throw down for a new pair of shoes. Thank you for your vote of confidence, and, for the first time ever, for helping us craft this year's rock-shoe test criteria.



ACOPA ENZO

PRICE: \$115
SIZE: Men's 3-13
acopausa.com
★★★★

THIS MEDIUM-FLEX, MODERATELY stiff, relatively flat slipper with a modest curve from heel to toe is tailor-made for the bulk of the climbing population, especially those who aren't sold on crazy, foot-crushing slippers and shoes.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Natural guayule rubber (the stuff the Aztecs used to make the first rubber balls) is super tacky, and sticks magically to glassy and polished holds, and holds where you don't fully weight your foot. Everyone I've met who has used this rubber is super psyched on it.
- Good foot compression for power, but overall has a relaxed design that doesn't torque or squeeze your foot. Comfortable.

- Medium-flex slipper edges and smears well, and is a good compromise for climbers who want a slipper, but can't deal with a super-soft one.
- Loads of rubber over the toe, heel and instep, so it hooks great in any situation.
- Easy to get on and off.

CONS: Not as precise and powerful as a real foot-crusher.
RECOMMENDED FOR: Sport, gym, bouldering and cracks hand-size and smaller.
FIT: I tested a U.S. 8.5 and it really fit my medium-width foot. No lining, but a rubber piece over the top of the shoe limits stretch. The fit you have when the slipper is new is about what you'll have after heavy use.

—Duane Raleigh

ACOPA JB

PRICE: \$135
SIZE: Men's 3-15
acopausa.com
★★★



MAKE NO MISTAKE, THIS IS A BOOT, not a shoe. It's stiff and burly, with a high-top for extra support and ankle protection. This shoe is made to survive big walls and probably bombs, too.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Natural guayule rubber (see comments for Acopa Enzo).
- Extremely rigid, but smears amazingly well and edges with authority.

- High top, full and beefy rands offer great foot protection.

CONS: Too burly for most applications. Interior heel seam rubs heel.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Big routes, like the *Nose* and *Salathé*, walls with a mix of free and aid and wide cracks.

FIT: Tested 8.5. Expect your foot to mold to the boot, not vice versa; get a full-size larger than usual, and wear a sock for full comfort.
—DR

BOREAL SPYDER

PRICE: \$119
SIZE: Men's 3-13
e-boreal.com/USA
★★★★



THE SPYDER FEELS SOFT, BUT BEATS the sloppiness inherent in midsole-less designs by cambering the rubber under the forefoot. I particularly liked the one-piece sole/rand/heel. This unique feature molds the sole and rand to your foot and helps this slipper excel at heel-hooking.

JUST THE FACTS:

- No midsole so super soft.

- Canvas lined, slip lasted.
- One-piece sole/rand/heel. Helped with burly heel-hook testpieces.

CONS: Too soft for extreme edging or long vertical routes.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Indoor, bouldering, sport climbing.

FIT: I wore a U.S. 10.5 and the shoe fit well.

—Jeff Jackson



BOREAL MUTANT

PRICE: \$119
SIZES: Men's 3-13
e-boreal.com/USA
★★★★

THE MUTANT'S INTEGRATED RAND/ sole really compresses the foot and ups the performance on this slipper. The addition of a Velcro strap high on the foot secures the heel and provides some stability mid-foot, and the medium-stiff half-midsole provides support for edging and toeing into pockets. This is an easy shoe to get on and off.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Boreal FS QUATTRO rubber. Sticky.
- Integrated sole/rand/heel compresses

the foot for stability and strength.

- Unlined leather stretches to fit.
- Easy on and off makes this shoe a good choice for the gym or boulders.

CONS: Must fit the shoes uncomfortably tight at first to compensate for stretch.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Overhanging bouldering, sport, indoor.

FIT: I wore a U.S. 10.5 and it was tight at first but stretched to fit well.

—JJ

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[FIELD TESTED]

THE TESTERS

BY THE NUMBERS

TESTER DUANE RALEIGH

FOOT 9 U.S. street shoe

FOOT SHAPE I have a wide, high-volume foot with a high arch. Many Euro-lasted shoes crush my toes because they are meant for narrow Euro feet. U.S.-specific fits, which are usually wider, work well for me. I don't have a Morton's Toe. At 150 pounds, I don't necessarily need a board-stiff shoe.

LIKES High-performance shoes that I can wear for several hours at a time bouldering or in the gym. Usually, these are basic, flat-lasted shoes with moderately stiff midsoles that power up the edging without torturing my feet (same preferences as the average reader). Given the choice between an edging or smearing shoe, I prefer the stiffer edging shoe. My favorite shoes aren't sexy, but I can wear them on about anything, and for most of the day. I really like shoes with padded heels for bouldering.

DISLIKES Pull tabs that are difficult to get my fingers through, and shoes with hard lumps of stitching or reinforcing that rub your feet. I try to stay away from radically cambered shoes, as these are too painful unless I size them large, and then I lose all the advantages of the design. My feet are weak, so soft shoes or those without midsoles are usually too floppy for me.

TESTER ANDREW BISHARAT

FOOT 10 U.S. street shoe

FOOT SHAPE Pretty average. I fit into most brands. I don't have Morton's Toe or anything gross like that.

LIKES I loved most shoes I tested this year. Steep, gymnastic climbs are my favorite, and I prefer an aggressive shoe. For longer routes, I like a stiff leather model. I prefer lace-ups to both Velcro closures and slippers. My all-time favorite shoes are the La Sportiva Testarossa and Miura and the new Scarpa Mago.

DISLIKES Bad pull tabs, too much rubber under the toe, and anything too stiff or too soft. I think Vibram's XS Grip rubber is some of the best sticky rubber I've used, but the Vibram logo imprint in the rubber is potentially a disadvantage. The logo has landed right on the shoe's edge and/or toe on some of the shoes I've worn. It's not a huge deal, but the imprint can deteriorate the rubber quicker.

TESTER JEFF JACKSON

FOOT 11 U.S. street shoe

FOOT SHAPE Narrow with a high arch. I have no foot abnormalities other than wicked toenail fungus.

LIKES High-performance shoes that excel in a wide variety of climbing styles—cracks, face, slab and steps. For bouldering and gym climbing, however, I like to designate a slipper. Now that I've passed 40, comfort is king. Shoes that I can wear for an hour without turning my toes black and blue are good. All-time favorite shoe: La Sportiva Mythos.

DISLIKES Shoes that are difficult to get on and off, heel tabs that I can't get my beefy fingers through and designs that torque my feet. Baggy heels that skid off hooks irritate me, but nothing tweaks me more than rubber that doesn't perform. I want the stickiest rubber on the market.

TESTER LAURA SNIDER

FOOT 9.5 women's street shoe

FOOT SHAPE Because my feet are long and spindly, they fit best in low-volume, Euro-style shoes with a narrow heel cup.

LIKES Shoes that marry comfort and precision. I want a shoe that I don't have to take off at the belay on long routes but that isn't a sloppy performer.

DISLIKES Ultra-stiff shoes that keep your toes from feeling the rock, and heel cups that are so radically curved they cut into my Achilles.

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[FIELD TESTED]



FIVE TEN ANASAZI VERDE

PRICE: \$139
SIZES: Men's 4-13
fiveten.com
★★★

THE VERDE, THE NEW ADDITION to Five Ten's famed Anasazi line, is a great edging shoe, perfect for vertical face climbing. I think it's also great for crack climbing. The Verde comes with a thick layer of rubber underneath the toe, which caused sensitivity problems on micro edges and smears until the rubber wore down and I was able to feel the rock better. The shoelace holes are closely spaced, creating a cluttered web of laces that are difficult to adjust. I solved the problem by simply threading the laces through every other hole.

JUST THE FACTS:

- One of the more expensive shoes tested.
- Durable and sticky Onyx rubber.
- Less sensitive but more versatile than the Anasazi Velcros.
- New "magic fingers" heel cup fit my heel well, but it dug into my Achilles tendon.

CONS: Too much rubber on the sole, and rubber is too thick and stiff on the heel. Made heel-hooking difficult, and micro-edging less precise.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Depending on what size you get, this shoe could work for sport climbing and bouldering as well as long trad routes and crack climbing. Multi-purpose.

FIT: I wore a tight 9.5 for sport routes and a 10.5 for crack climbing.

—Andrew Bisharat

FIVE TEN GAMBIT

PRICE: \$115
SIZES: Men's 4-13
fiveten.com
★★



WHEN I FIRST SLIPPED THESE shoes on and climbed through my warm-up circuit, I experienced something like puppy love. The Gambits felt good and performed, but within a week felt sloppy, sweaty and kind of gross. These shoes are light and stretch too much. I'd recommend fitting them tight to avoid sloshing.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Super-sticky Stealth Onyx rubber.
- Perforated, breathable synthetic upper seemed too stretchy.
- Comfortable.

CONS: Limited performance.

RECOMMENDED FOR: All day up to 5.11.

FIT: I wore a 10.5 and my toes were at the end. I'd probably go down .5 to deal with the stretch.

—JJ

EVOLV PONTAS

PRICE: \$115
SIZES: Men's 5-13.5
evolvesports.com
★★★★



THE PONTAS IS PRECISE, powerful, supportive—and comfortable. This is a top-flight shoe that even entry-level climbers can make good use of. It's reasonably flat and only slightly banana lasted, so most of us average climbers will really dig it, but the V12 and 5.14 crowd will find that it treats them just as well.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Nothing radical in the design. It is almost flat, has a mildly tensioned heel rand and is only slightly curved heel to toe.
- A moderately stiff midsole and Velcro straps make it precise.
- Trax-XT5 rubber is sweet. Frictions and edges well.

CONS: Sweaty foot can slip in shoe, especially in heel.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Sport, gym and bouldering. Also is good for extended outings where you need foot support ... long Tuolumne face routes come to mind.

FIT: Tested 8.5. Medium to narrow foot. Synthetic upper with full cotton lining keeps the fit. Vegan friendly, too. As with all Evolv shoes, for an additional \$30, you can order this one with different left and right sizes.

—DR

FM TECH DRAGON

PRICE: \$95
SIZE: 35-48
fitech.ca
★★★★



THE DRAGON IS CRAZY: its sole is tensioned from toe to heel, but left loose under the arch. The flap in the sole seemed gimmicky, but I couldn't tell if it was the sole design or the steeply downturned toe, which turns your feet into claws, that made the shoe climb so well.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Tensioned sole keeps shoe shape, but the jury is still out on whether it improves performance.
- Moderately stiff sole, which is unusual for a design of this sort. I liked it, preferring to give up a bit of feel for support.
- Aggressive, downturned toe is great for pawing the undersides of caves.
- X2 rubber felt similar to Vibram XS Grip—very sticky.
- Easy on/off, and adjusts with Velcro.
- Excellent toe hooking. Heel hooks well, but I prefer a smooth heel over a ribbed one.

CONS: Unlined leather stretches a lot.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Sport, gym and bouldering, and steeper is better.

FIT: I tested a 42, and I could've gone a half-size smaller. The Dragon stretches quickly and copiously: size them as snug as you can stand.

—DR

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[FIELD TESTED]

LA SPORTIVA KUMO

PRICE: \$85
SIZE: 33-46
sportiva.com
★★★★



THE KUMO IS COMFORTABLE, SIMPLE and well-made. You won't be seeing this shoe on *Action Directe* anytime soon, but that's not what it's for. A middle-of-the-road model, it seems like a Velcro version of the La Sportiva Mythos. With the usual fine craftsmanship of La Sportiva, the Kumo is a true bargain at \$85. Even an "expert" like myself could rely on this great beginner shoe.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Good price point.
- Vibram FriXion rubber isn't as sticky

as the Vibram XS Grip used on other Sportiva shoes, but it still works on all but the glassiest smears.

- Easy pull tabs, and good Velcro straps.

CONS: Rubber could be stickier.

RECOMMENDED FOR: This shoe is an all-rounder for beginner and moderate climbers—whether gym, sport, trad, etc. I'd hesitate to wear it on smooth Yosemite slabs, but that's it.

FIT: I tested a 41.5, an excellent and super-comfortable fit. I could wear these shoes all day.

—AB

LA SPORTIVA SOLUTION

PRICE: \$145
SIZE: 33-44
sportiva.com
★★★★



LA SPORTIVA HAS PATENTS UP THE wazoo for this bouldering slipper. The "P3" design, which stands for Performance Power Platform, retains the downturned shape of the toe, unlike many similar shoes that lose their aggressiveness after months of wear. This shoe is for steep bouldering and power toe moves—it took two weeks of breaking in before I could smear and edge. This is a specialized shoe, one I plan on bringing to Hueco this fall.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Vibram XS Grip high-friction rubber sole. Excellent, sticky and durable.
- Most expensive new shoe.
- Unique Velcro closure. A tab closes the

shoe from two points. This seemed to suck the shoe up into the arch of my foot really well. Also, a wide Velcro swath allows you to micro-adjust by closing the tab in different places. This is one of the easiest on-and-off slippers I've ever used.

- The heel cup contains a little foam that helps dampen falls a bit. It's unnoticeable during climbing, but did interfere with some hooks.

CONS: Forget about smearing.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Steep bouldering.

FIT: I tested a 41.5, which fit perfectly. I could wear the shoe for extended periods, and there was zero dead space.

—AB

LA SPORTIVA TAKA

PRICE: \$80
SIZE: 33-48
sportiva.com
★★★



A STUDY IN MODERATION, THESE shoes are neither sloppy nor precise, neither stiff nor soft, and neither particularly sticky nor slippery. For only \$80, the Takas are a deal—they'll get the curious beginner out exploring the rocks in a wide variety of places.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Good price point.
- Won't torque your feet or twist your toes. Flat and straight, they feel comfy

the first time you put them on.

- A stiff midsole allows for moderate edging.
- Low rands expose uppers to harsh cracks—I wore a hole in the side the first time I took them crack climbing.

CONS: Though these shoes edge in a pinch, don't expect that they'll be your secret weapon for sending a route choked with dime-sized edges.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Beginning climbers looking for variety, from crack face to slab.

FIT: Medium to narrow feet. Unlined shoes stretch quickly and copiously.

—Laura Snider

[FIELD TESTED]



MAD ROCK FRENZY

PRICE: \$79.95
SIZES: Men's 3, 6-13
madrockclimbing.com
 ★ ★ ★ ★

I USUALLY HAVE A TOUGH TIME

evaluating a stiff shoe like this one because they take forever to break in, but the Frenzy softened up straight away. This is the type of shoe I normally like, and it should also dovetail with the majority of readers, as it fits the survey bill almost perfectly. It's flat and very supportive, and has a relaxed fit. It edges great and is one of the more comfortable shoes I tested. The Frenzy was available last year; this year's model boasts a ribbed heel and a "lace rand" for, according to Mad Rock, extra grip and lace protection in cracks.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Good price point.

- Stiff, supportive and flat design equals comfort and support.
- Low-profile toe and generous rubber coverage make it one of the better crack shoes.
- Mad Rock FX5 rubber.
- Ribbed heel isn't so aggressive that I found it bothersome.

CONS: None for me.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Long routes and all-day wear. I'd grab this shoe for multi-pitch Valley cracks and those endless Tuolumne slabs. Heavy climbers who have a hard time in soft shoes will also dig these.

FIT: I wear a 9 street shoe, and the 9 Frenzy was a tight, performance fit. I'd go up a half size for better all-day comfort. Laces accommodate a wide foot.

—DR



MAD ROCK SUPER LOCO

PRICE: \$109.95
SIZE: Men's 3-13
madrockclimbing.com
 ★ ★

THIS IS A VERY AGGRESSIVE, DOWN-

turned shoe. It sports sticky rubber all over—even the hot-fire flame design on the side of the foot is made of Mad Rubber. The shoe performed really well on heel hooks, but was only OK on edges and overhanging rock. With all the rubber on the shoe, the Super Loco was not breathable—my sweaty dogs slid around.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Three Velcro straps tighten the shoe. Because the shoe was baggy, I had to cinch these down hard so my foot wouldn't slide around, which was eventually painful.

- Mad Rock's patented dual rubber sole.
- Rubber fins on top of the foot—a design that ostensibly helps with toe hooks, but in my experience only works in certain circumstances.
- Two thin pull tabs are difficult to get fingers into.
- Ribbed heel cup works very well. It's sensitive and sticky.

CONS: Baggy design. Becomes sweaty and foot slips around inside of shoe. Became painful at midsole after extended wear.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Sport, bouldering and gym climbing.

FIT: Tested a 10.5, which was as small as I could go.

—AB



MONTRAIL SMYTHERS

PRICE: \$100
SIZES: 34-46
montrail.com
 ★ ★ ★ ★

JUST THE FACTS:

- Gryptonite HT rubber. Very grippy and durable.
- Full-length midsole helps ward off foot fatigue.
- Wide slingshot rand disperses pressure evenly.

CONS: Too stiff for tricky smearing. Long break-in period.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Hard redpoints to 30 degrees overhanging, hard trad, all-day edging.

FIT: I tested a Euro 44 and they fit perfectly.

—JJ

THESE LACE-UPS ARE THE CADILLAC of high-performance, all-around shoes—plush comfort that gets the job done. Montrail includes a pillow of foam under the toes, over the toes and in the heel of the Smythers that cushions the heel and packs in the forefoot. I really like the prop under the toes, which activates the foot and acts like a yoga bolster for your hard-working tootsies. The chiseled toe works well in pockets.

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[FIELD TESTED]



RED CHILI CORONA VCR

PRICE: \$105
SIZES: U.K. Men's 4-13
redchili.de

★★★

LAST YEAR, I TESTED THE Corona, the lace-up version of this shoe, and found it stiff and painful. This year, however, Red Chili tweaked its design to come up with the Corona VCR, a great all-around to high-performance Velcro slipper. The shoe is comfortable and sensitive: you can stand on micro-edges with confidence because you feel what is going on underfoot. This model has no radical downturn, but the last is asymmetrical, pointing your toe toward the center.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Red Chili rubber is sensitive and sticky.
- The heel cup fit my foot and gave enough sensitivity to hook well.
- Cushioned flaps on top of the foot were comfortable.
- A triangular cut of rubber on top of the foot helped with toe hooks.

CONS: Pull tabs are difficult to get my fingers into. The Velcro straps are too long—when I tightened them all the way down, they extended off the shoe about an inch, interfering with my climbing. The rubber triangle on top of the shoe dug into the crease created when I flexed my foot.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Bouldering, gym, sport routes.

FIT: I tested a U.K. 10, which fit perfectly. Because the Velcro tabs are so long, this shoe could easily accommodate high-volume feet.

—AB



SCARPA BOOSTER

PRICE: \$125
SIZE: 35-45
scarpa.com

★★★★★

THIS, A VELCRO VERSION of the Scarpa Maġo, is the best Scarpa rock shoe I have worn. It fit so well I would have sworn that it was actually made for me. An underfoot "X" of rubber sucks the shoe up into your arch like crazy, a tensioned heel snuggs up that part, and the two Velcro bands let you crank the shoe up tight. Although it has a radical camber and twist, I didn't mind and I usually don't like those qualities in a shoe.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Crazy twist and other design power up the toe and inside edge.
- Cupped sole is great for pulling with your toes on super-steep rock, and rubber patch over the toes gives you a bit more traction for toe hooks.
- Heavy leather upper makes this one burly shoe.
- Wide foot opening, large dual heel tabs and Velcro straps make the shoe extremely easy to get on and off.
- Vibram XS Grip rubber sole.

CONS: Design causes toes to knuckle up, creating a bulky pooh that won't slip into tight spots as easily as shoes with a flatter toe profile.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Sport, gym and bouldering, and the steeper the better.

FIT: I tested a 42 for a comfortable fit. Medium-to-wide, high-volume feet will slip right into the Booster.

—DR

[FIELD TESTED]



SCARPA STIX

PRICE: \$110
SIZES: Men's 3-45
scarpa.net
 ★★☆☆

THIS SLIPPER COULD UP your bouldering on angles steeper than 30 degrees by an entire V grade. The radical camber lets you paw features on steep walls with surprising ease, but also works like a charm for precision edging on vertical walls. Unlike many models with aggressive downturn, these shoes retained their shape even after a few weeks of wear. A pocket developed in the outside upper but didn't affect performance.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Vibram XS Grip rubber. Some of the stickiest stuff I tested.
 - Slip on.
 - Asymmetrical, toe-down last.
- CONS:** The upper stretched and became baggy around the upper foot after two weeks.
RECOMMENDED FOR: Steep bouldering.
FIT: I wore a 43.5 but would probably size down .5 in hopes that the upper would fit better.

—JJ



RED CHILI DURANGO

PRICE: \$69
SIZE: U.K. Men's 4-13
redchili.de
 ★★

THESE PRICE-POINT SHOES ARE built for comfort and durability. As expected, however, they didn't perform as well as the spendier models by the same company. While the Durango is a good choice for the frugal who want an all-around performer, I would not recommend these to anyone who plans to climb above 5.10.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Red Chili RX 1 rubber. Very sticky.
 - All-leather upper that laces to the toe.
 - Fits most foot shapes.
 - Least expensive shoe in review.
 - Durable.
- CONS:** Barebones design doesn't perform well on harder routes. Almost useless on angles greater than 30 degrees overhanging.
RECOMMENDED FOR: Beginning climbers, gyms and guide services
FIT: I wore a U.K. 10, which fit in length, but the shoe felt baggy and cumbersome compared to sleeker, higher-end models from the same company.

—JJ



RED CHILI MESCALITO

PRICE: \$109
SIZE: U.K. Men's 5-13
redchili.de
 ★★☆☆

THE MESCALITO IS A TRUE all-around performer. The clunky-looking straight last and medium-stiff insole give the shoe an old-school appearance and they *do* work well on vertical rock and in cracks. I wore these in Eldo on the techy vertical face routes and was wowed by the performance, but I'd fetch out the Mescalito for roofs, too. The straight shape is great for heel-toe hooks and the half-sole stiffener helps with precision and toeing down on small edges when the going gets steep.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Red Chili RX 1 rubber. Very sticky stuff.
 - No frills, slingshot rand, lace-ups work well for almost every style of climbing.
 - Comfortable, padded tongue helps pack in the foot.
 - Durable.
- CONS:** Too stiff for extreme smears.
RECOMMENDED FOR: All-around performance. Particularly suited to high-angle face climbing.
FIT: I wore a U.K. 10 and the shoe fit perfectly.

—JJ



SCARPA MAGO

PRICE: \$130
SIZE: 33-45
scarpa.com
 ★★☆☆

THE MAGO IS ONE OF THE BEST shoes I've ever worn for sport climbing. The shoe turns down for toe power, but it also performs well on smears and edges. The suede upper is comfortable for extended wear, and the laces are easy to tie and adjust for a precise fit. When compared to my other all-time favorite, the La Sportiva Testarossa, the Mago is a bit less aggressive, though both are equally comfortable and high performance.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Vibram XS Grip high-friction rubber sole. Excellent, sticky and durable.
 - X-Tension TM system wraps two crisscrossing pieces of rubber beneath the sole. They help suck the shoe up into your heel and arch, all but eliminating any dead spots in the shoe.
 - Two bomber, adroit pull tabs and a comfortable heel that can hook on anything.
- CONS:** None.
RECOMMENDED FOR: Sport climbing.
FIT: I tested a 41.5, which fit perfectly. The shoe stretched just a bit, enough to ease extended wear.

—AB

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