

POLE STARS

Jo Vaughan tests a selection of lean machines

1. Leki Trail

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Only available in pairs, these Leki poles are three-sectioned. From the company's Premium Range, they feature a special finish that keeps them looking newer for longer. Each has a single 'basket' (a circular cap designed to prevent the pole sinking into the mire) and plastic end that can't be used on the road. Mid-weight, they offer great grips for smaller hands.

GOOD ALL ROUNDER

AT A GLANCE

RRP: £80 per pair
Colour: black and red
Weight: 285g each
Contact: 01250 873863; ardblairsports.com

2. Grivel 3.18

This serious and technical pole is very sturdy, light and functional. Weighing just 289g, it features a patented 'up and down' system (traditional twisting mechanisms can get jammed with grit or sand if you're not careful) that allows you to change its length. This is another three-section pole (the bottom part twists as normal) and there's a foam grip and sturdy wrist strap. The 3.18, which is available only in pairs, has no anti-shock system or rubber bung for the tip, but there are two different sizes of basket.

HIGH-TECH

AT A GLANCE

RRP: £80 per pair
Colour: yellow
Weight: 289g each
Contact: grivel.com; UK agent, call 0191 296 0212 or see mountainboot.co.uk

3. Fizan Compact

The maker claims this trendy-looking hiking pole is the lightest in the world – and when it weighs 158g, who am I to argue? This is another three-section pole, adjusted by way of a twisting system. It features a rubber tip protector and small basket, and the Neoprene strap secures it to your wrist nicely. It is available in a range of colours – green, black, gold, blue and 'Exclusive'. The gently-shaped, soft handgrip is possibly suited more to those with larger hands.

ULTRA LIGHT

AT A GLANCE

RRP: £50 per pole
Colour: various
Weight: 158g
Contact: 0191 284 8444; allcord.co.uk

4. Hawkshead Adventure Walking Pole

Hawkshead's anti-shock pole is a simple option at a much lower price than some of the other products. It's perfectly adequate for most walking situations, is comfortable to hold thanks to its shaped grip and has a rubber bung and small basket for the end. It's a little heavier than the others – but not by much, especially considering the price difference. It's a three-section pole once again, with a swivelling mechanism to change the length. The wrist strap has a soft backing so it's kind to your skin.

GOOD VALUE

AT A GLANCE

RRP: £19.50 per pole
Colour: green
Weight: 315g
Contact: 0844 824 6006; hawkshead.com

5. Vango Deluxe Cork

This is the most expensive of Vango's range of five different walking poles (the cheapest costs just £16). This Deluxe cane is a three-section stick that adjusts from 70cm to 140cm. The cork handle is shaped and comfortable to hold, and it has an adjustable strap that fits around your hand. At 320g, it isn't the lightest pole, but it feels very strong and reliable. The tungsten tip has a rubber cover for use on tarmac and to protect your cupboards. There are two different baskets – a smaller one for general use and a wider one which would be great for snowy conditions.

COMFORT OPTION

AT A GLANCE

RRP: £38 per pole
Colour: silver
Weight: 320g
Contact: 0844 811 0535; vango.co.uk

6. Grivel Himalaya Pole

Our second Grivel pole folds into a very small package measuring just 17in long – perfect if you've not much storage space. It separates into three pieces (like a tent pole) which are threaded together by a cord. When folded, a built-in hook-and-loop fastener attached to the wrist strap holds the three sections tidily together. The rubber grip isn't as well shaped to your hand as others, and you only get one basket to use above the carbide sinterised tip. There is a single, standard, twisting length adjuster and it comes in two sizes – 115cm and 125cm.

FOLDS SMALL

AT A GLANCE

RRP: £90 per pair
Colour: black and yellow
Weight: 232g each
Contact: grivel.com; UK agent, call 0191 296 0212 or see mountainboot.co.uk



NEXT MONTH
We take a look at a selection of alloy-wheel cleaners



PHOTOGRAPHY: Andy Parkington at Radius