



CALLING ALL RUNNERS

This shoe brings carbon-plated speed to the masses

BY LISA JHUNG AND CORY SMITH

Since carbon-plated shoes were introduced, countless world, national, and personal records have fallen. But most pairs are helpful for only a certain group of runners: the rigid carbon-fiber plate combined with a soft foam favors those with efficient strides over those with less-than-perfect form. The new **Hoka Tecton X** (\$200), one of the few carbon-plated trail kicks on the market, defies that pattern. This is a high-tech shoe for all abilities. "It's one of the few carbon-plated shoes that I—a not-fast runner with poor form—can actually appreciate," noted one tester. What's the secret sauce here that makes everyday athletes feel like superstars? For starters, designers ditched the standard single carbon plate in favor of two parallel ones positioned next to each other. These plates move independently, producing a more forgiving, flexible ride. Then there's the dual-density midsole: Hoka's most responsive, energetic EVA topped with a layer of softer foam directly underfoot. "The shoe is poppy without being stiff," remarked one tester. "It's hard not to feel energized," said another. Underfoot, tightly spaced four-millimeter lugs offered what another tester described as "enough of what you need, none of what you don't." The result is a grippy yet sensitive ride on everything from gravel roads to dusty, winding singletrack. All in all, the result delivers supershoe benefits to FKT chasers and weekend warriors alike. 8.5 oz (men's) / 6.9 oz (women's); 4mm drop

WORKOUT



DUST UP

These rugged runners love to rally

BY LISA JHUNG
AND CORY SMITH

BEST ALL-TERRAIN SHOE

Saucony Peregrine 12 \$130

Designers managed to slim down the Saucony Peregrine 12 by over an ounce compared to its predecessor. The result feels more flexible and sensitive than the heavily cushioned Peregrine 11, allowing for fast, precise footwork through technical terrain. Much of the credit goes to the redesigned rock plate, which is now lighter and more flexible, allowing your foot to bend and move naturally with the trail. The five-millimeter outsole lugs offer excellent traction on a wider variety of surfaces, from wet grass to loose kitty litter. Testers with wide and narrow feet alike agreed that the fit was on-point thanks to a pliable recycled-polyester upper with laces that cinch smoothly around the midfoot. 8.3 oz (women's, pictured) / 9.7 oz (men's); 4 mm drop

BEST FAST SHOE

Nike Air Zoom Terra Kiger 8 \$140

With the least cushioning of all the shoes in this lot—just 16.5 millimeters in the heel for men and 15 millimeters for women—the Kiger 8 feels minimalist on trail. But it never felt lacking. The wide outsole platform yields a stable ride. And the midsole, while slight, has plenty of substance. It's made from Nike's lively React foam, a mix of shock-absorbent EVA and responsive thermoplastic polymers, with an air unit under the forefoot that adds noticeable pop to each toe-off and a rock plate under the heel for protection that maintains forefoot flexion. The snug, breathable mesh upper is fully lined to block out excessive dirt and pebbles. 8.5 oz (women's, pictured) / 10.5 oz (men's); 3.6 mm drop (women's) / 4.5 mm drop (men's)

BEST ALL-ADVENTURE SHOE

Merrell MTL Long Sky 2 \$140

If you run a bit of everything—rocky scrambles, stream crossings, steep hills, wooded forests, dry and dusty desert singletrack—the MTL Long Sky is here for it. Its firm, low-to-the-ground midsole (23.5 millimeters of foam in the heel and 19.5 millimeters up front) yields a nimble feel on all manner of technical terrain. That's bolstered by the outsole, which boasts five-millimeter, multi-directional lugs made of high-performing Vibram MegaGrip, which grab all trail surfaces with aplomb. And should you get caught in a summer rain shower or need to splash through a mountain stream, the mesh and TPU upper breathes well and dries impressively fast. 8 oz (women's, pictured) / 10 oz (men's); 4 mm drop

**BEST ZERO-DROP SHOE****Altra Lone Peak 6 \$140**

This consistently reliable zero-drop trail and ultrarunning shoe has never disappointed us. Our Altra enthusiasts found comfort in knowing that version 6 delivers the same underfoot feeling they've come to love from previous iterations of the Lone Peak franchise. Underfoot, it still employs Altra's fast and peppy, yet comfortable and soft, EVA midsole. "It's protective and responsive when I need it to be," said one tester, "but still comfortable when I'm power-hiking or walking up hills." The biggest difference is in weight savings: small, cosmetic updates to the upper, such as a simplified heel construction, additional midfoot lacing holes, and more drainage ports shed nearly half an ounce for a lighter and trimmer feel. 10.6 oz (men's, pictured) / 8.5 oz (women's); zero drop

BEST FOR RUGGED TERRAIN**Dynafit Ultra 50 \$130**

This shoe strikes a great balance between burly and spry. The four-millimeter lugs yield great underfoot protection and traction, while TPU overlays and nylon forefoot reinforcements keep you locked in securely, even on rugged, technical terrain. Meanwhile, the EVA midsole lacks a rock plate, yielding a flexible forefoot and thus excellent uphill mobility. It's also springy yet soft enough to absorb the impacts of long runs on rugged terrain. Somehow the whole package remains relatively lightweight. The shoe is snug in the heel but wide in the forefoot, allowing for toe splay and blood flow. "I felt stable and secure on Boulder's steep and rocky climbs," said a tester. "I also felt confident on the descents." 10.2 oz (men's, pictured) / 8.8 oz (women's); 4 mm drop

BEST CROSSOVER SHOE**Scarpa Golden Gate ATR \$149**

The Golden Gate ATR stays true to Scarpa's hallmark ruggedness, but tones it down into a road-to-trail crossover. This shoe looks tall, but boasts a modest 28 millimeters of heel stack. Testers agreed that the dual-density EVA midsole—softer, low density underfoot and firmer, medium density on the sides—felt downright stiff. Yet those who like firm shoes are rewarded with a lively, responsive ride on both trail and road. Mild four-millimeter lugs boost that versatility. "It has a snappy, high-energy cadence," said one tester. The tight-fitting, integrated neoprene-like upper felt a little abrasive out of the box for some but eased over time into a comfy, protective glove to shed pesky trail debris. 10.2 oz (men's, pictured) / 8.6 oz (women's); 4 mm drop

WORKOUT



HIT THE PAVEMENT

Kicks for logging tarmac miles

BY LISA JHUNG AND CORY SMITH

BEST LONG-RUN SHOE

a. Craft Pro Endur Distance \$150
This Swedish-made shoe has an off-the-charts weight-to-cushioning ratio. At just 8.2 ounces for men and 6.3 ounces for women, it delivers 34 millimeters of foam in the heel and 24 up front. Credit a thermoplastic midsole foam that's similar to Pebax—a material often found in carbon-plated super shoes that delivers more energy and impact resistance than traditional EVA or TPU, but at a fraction of the weight. That speedy midsole is bolstered by the airy one-piece engineered-mesh upper, which fits snugly yet unobtrusively around the midfoot. You'd be hard-pressed to find a more comfortable, cushioned neutral trainer that feels this lively. 8.2 oz (men's, pictured) / 6.3 oz (women's); 10 mm drop

BEST SUPPORTIVE SHOE

b. Adidas Ultraboost 22 \$190
This über-comfy knit shoe boasts a midsole made from Adidas's expanded-TPU Boost foam, which produces a soft and cushy ride—more Cadillac than sports car. "I would wear these on a day when my body felt like it needed a little extra love," said one tester. The shoe also gets bonus points for the stretchy upper, which is made of 50 percent polyester and 50 percent recycled ocean plastic. We're particularly excited about the women's model. It's fit around a last that was based on scans of 1.2 million women's feet. The outcome: a slightly narrower instep (from top to bottom), a narrower heel hold, and a dense rubber segment on the medial outsole to keep feet from rolling inward, since women tend to pronate more than men. 11.9 oz (men's, pictured) / 8.4 oz (women's); 10 mm drop

MOST COMFORTABLE SHOE

c. Nike React Infinity Flyknit 3 \$160
Good shoes make you want to go running. The React Infinity Flyknit is that kind of shoe. It employs Nike's React foam, which combines EVA with thermoplastic polymers to produce energetic pop without sacrificing cushion—ideal for fast long runs. The moderately stacked midsole (34.2 to 25.2 millimeters for men, 31.7 to 23.4 for women) also flares wide under the forefoot and heel, offering a touch of pronation control. That's helped by a knit upper that wraps securely around the arch, while a plush heel collar adds to the supreme comfort. 11.2 oz (men's, pictured) / 9 oz (women's); 9 mm drop (men's) / 8.4 mm drop (women's)

BEST VALUE

d. Saucony Axon 2 \$100

This shoe may come with a reasonable price tag, but it certainly doesn't skimp on cushioning. A generous stack of EVA-blend foam—35 millimeters under the heel and 31 up front—had us feeling well protected from the impacts of concrete and asphalt. But because this particular foam blend is firm and responsive rather than squishy and energy-sucking, all that joint-saving mass doesn't come at the expense of a peppy feel. Noticeable curvature at the forefoot helps roll you forward for a fast ride and toe-off. A breathable mesh upper and sleek tongue keep the shoe from feeling overbuilt. For those who want one shoe to run various distances and hop into an occasional race, this relatively light model could be your quiver of one. 8.5 oz (women's, pictured) / 9.6 oz (men's); 4 mm drop



BEST MAX-CUSHION SHOE

e. Diadora Equipe Atomo \$195

This shoe exhibits the type of careful craftsmanship we expect from hand-made Italian goods. Runners who like a lot of foam underfoot but find most max-cushioned shoes too mushy will enjoy the energetic feeling of the Atomo's firm midsole: a full-length layer of EVA blended with a proprietary compressed rubber material. That midsole balances out the 27.5-millimeter heel stack and wide profile so you get a stable fit and impact-absorbent ride, but also a quick, sporty stride. A thick engineered-mesh upper paired with a modestly padded tongue and collar kept our feet comfortable and happy during the longest of long runs. 6.7 oz (women's, pictured) / 8.8 oz (men's); 5 mm drop



BEST FOR TEMPO RUNS

f. Asics Noosa Tri 14 \$130

Named after the largest Olympic-distance triathlon in the world, Asics' Noosa Tri 14 is the daily trainer our testers reached for when they wanted to go fast. It has a lower profile and slightly softer midsole than the Noosa Tri 13, and it features a sharper forefoot rocker that promotes an efficient forward roll during toe-off. The result feels like a slingshot with each stride. But don't let the namesake fool you: this is more than just a triathlon shoe. "This is a simple, no-nonsense, efficient trainer," said one tester. It's ideal for uptempo runs and race days. 6.6 oz (women's, pictured) / 7.5 oz (men's); 5 mm drop

