

Paragon Adventures Footwear recommendations

As outdoor adventure guides we become accustomed to the wide variety of terrain where our programs take place, and often forget that our guests often have little to no familiarity with the off trailing hiking that most of our offerings feature. It is becoming increasingly common for guests to arrive in footwear that is completely inappropriate for the terrain that we are going to traverse, and they find that given some advance information that they would have made different choices.

Over kill- Boots

Generally speaking we look for footwear that is not overkill in being excessively heavy, thick soled or suffocating. Guests who choose to wear ankle high (or higher) backpacking boots almost always find that they just do not lend themselves to the fast paced backcountry travel our programs feature. These boots are usually inflexible and offer little to no sense of what is underfoot. You may as well strap rubber covered two by fours onto your feet in terms of the sensitivity that these boots provide. Additionally they are very hot and excessively heavy which is a bad combination when the ground temperatures are often 30 degrees higher than the air just 18" higher. These types of footwear are intended for backpacking where you are carrying a heavy load and the addition of a shank the length of the boot provides both support and protection from the sharp rocks underfoot.

Underkill- Sandals

Yes some of our guides live in Chaco sandals, and manage to move through some absurd terrain in them, but they live here and spend their off days waiting for cactus spines to fester so they can get them out of their toes. Open toed shoes, or sandals do not provide any protection from the sharp and spiny vegetation just waiting to spear your feet. Even the Keen sandals with a closed toe provide large openings along the sides for stabbing vegetables, and are not recommended for most of our off trail programs. Nothing interrupts your enjoyment, (and stops a program in it's tracks) like digging a cactus spine out of the side of your foot.

Under kill- Five Fingers

The barefoot running trend seems to have begun to "run its course" (no pun intended) Human beings invented shoes for a pretty good reason and injured feet were probably high on the list. The Merrill 5 finger shoes that became fashionable a few years ago were terrible for the type of programs that we offer, in that they provided almost no side support at all. Often times, guides watched in amusement as the "shoes" rolled around the feet of the guests who desperately tried to stand on sloping ledges and stem on canyon walls. The thin rubber shells offer almost no protection at all against even the least aggressive vegetation. In short we are glad to see the fad come to an end.

Under kill – Ultra light weight running shoes

This seems to be either the next fad or at best a compromise between the desire to run barefoot and the consequences of living in a man made world of concrete and asphalt. While these light weight shoes with thick EVA foam are excellent for running on man made surfaces which are generally flat, they are the equivalent of roller blades in any backcountry hiking application. The foam that provides the contact surface has the least friction of any shoe that we have ever used, and makes each step a potential disaster. Every guest that has chosen to wear these for our programs has regretted that choice.

The Correct Choice:

Most of our staff wear some type of sticky rubber approach shoes, or trail running shoes designed for light and fast backcountry travel. Many of these have lightweight mesh that provide some ventilation, but with rubber coverage on the sides of the shoe that offer protection from desert vegetation. Without exception these shoes provide us the ability to handle the ruggedness of the terrain as well as provide good friction to keep our feet attached to the rock. This link gives a good representation of what we are talking about:

https://www.google.com/search?q=approach+shoes&biw=1600&bih=775&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAmoVChMlvKra5q2XxwIVhlylCh2N0QJ9

Example shoes that we want you to wear feature a rubber sole



Example shoes we do **not** want you to wear these feature a foam sole

