

## DESIRABLE HIKING BOOT QUALITIES & FEATURES

There are many good hiking boots brands: Asolo, Danner, Keen, Lowa, Merrell, Vasque, etc., ... the best pair I ever owned was a REI brand and, of course, they stopped making them.

Brand is far less important than proper fit, best available sale/value, and the most desirable features/qualities any good hiking boot should have: a reasonable boot toe rubber protection (otherwise the rocks just chew the front off); a waterproof design; as few materials making up the outer shell (not the place for jazzy design patch work of multiple materials, stitching's & seams), reasonable ankle support and a reasonably stiff sole with rugged tread and a rocker to it (if you can flex the sole like a pair of sneakers or regular dress shoes, this is generally NOT going to be a good hiking boot ... that is usually the most essential difference between a look alike, but fake, hiking boot and a real one.

The features, together with good fit, comfort and a good/quality insert with arch and other support are a must. Buying a \$100-\$200 pair of boots, and then having to buy a \$40 insert, is sometimes a necessary evil! Finally, **MAKE SURE YOU ARE WEARING HIKING SOCKS YOU INTEND TO WEAR WHEN YOU TRY ANY BOOT ON!**

### TO ILLUSTRATE A COMPARISON OF KEY BOOT FEATURES



This is a Teva “hiking boot” listed on a reputable discount site at \$140.00 and on sale for \$89.00. Most likely, however, this is more of a faux hiking boot. Styling and patchwork of shell materials is one clue but the real giveaway is the light, thin, un-branded & relatively smoother treaded sole. The “rocker” of the sole also seems more subdued than typically found on a real hiking boot. My guess is that the sole of this boot would easily flex when bent heel to toe more than a real hiking boot that should be more aggressively treaded, rockered and rigid. Also note the lower ankle support, lightweight toe guard & flimsy lower lace attach points.



The same site, <http://www.sierratradingpost.com>, lists this Vasque “hiking boot” at \$185.00 and on sale for \$135.00. A close comparison shows more monolithic shell materials with fewer fashionable seams, panels & stitchings, higher ankle support, and full length boot lace lugs. Both a name brand waterproof material (Gortex) and sole (Vibram) are listed. Far sturdier toe protection, a thicker sole, more aggressive sole tread, and rocker are also obvious. Unlike the faux hiking boot above, this is a real hiking boot.

Avoid generalized sporting goods stores as most of their offerings are faux hiking boots. Hunting Outfitters, such as Gander Mtn., are also not generally good sources. Appalachian Outfitters (show your Scout ID Card & get a 10% Discount), locally, or REI (closest at Pittsburgh & Cincinnati) are better sources and offer advice & try on's.