BRAND PROFILE: BERGANS OF NORWAY

For 105 years, Norwegian outdoor brand Bergans has been bringing new ideas to the market, but always with the emphasis on high levels of quality and functionality. The 2014 line will be no exception.

Nordic know-how

Outdoor brand Bergans of Norway unveiled a new 2014 line of products at industry exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic this summer.

Bergans was established in 1908, when founder, Ole Ferdinand Bergan, a bicycle manufacturer, invented the first anatomical backpack. An early admirer was Roald Amundsen, leader of the first expedition to reach the South Pole. The Amundsen team, using Bergans backpacks, arrived at the pole in December 1911. A rival expedition, led by Robert Scott, arrived more than six weeks later, also with Bergans packs on their backs. The company's reputation as a maker of material that could withstand any climate on earth grew from there. When mountaineers began their assaults on Mount Everest in the 1920s, Bergans equipment went with them. By the 1960s, the company was making sleeping-bags and then extreme jackets as well as the packs.



Bergans Norway says it will never stop focusing on high-end, high-tech outdoor clothing and equipment.

Bergans Norway

COPYRIGHT

Far-sighted fabric philosophy

Following several moves and two devastating fires, company headquarters are now in Hokksund, 60 kilometres south-west of Oslo, where 90-plus employees work in development, research, design and sales. Ryan Raymond isn't one of these, but is the territory manager for the brand in the Rocky Mountain region of the US. He says Bergans always does the best job possible to make sure its products will perform well in the outdoors. "The fabrics we have used in this new collection will not fail," he adds.

New products include a line of backpacks called Rondane. The packs come in seven different sizes with capacities ranging from six litres to 65. All but the two smallest feature a new proprietary adjustable shoulder harness system that Bergans has called QuickAdjust, and a patent-pending stability system called RS3 to prevent the packs from "jumping" around while on the wearer's shoulders.

Judge by the jackets

Another innovation is a series of lightweight jackets, including the Air, featuring Pertex



The Air jacket, part of the new collection for 2014, features Pertex Quantum GL fabric.

Bergans Norway

COPYRIGHT



Quantum GL fabric, and the Airojohka, a lightweight hiking jacket that uses Toray's Dermizax NX, a premium non-porous waterproof, windproof and breathable membrane. Bergans describes the Air as ideal for backpacking or endurance sports because it offers minimal packing volume, and high levels of strength-to-weight ratio and wind protection. It has a fixed hood with friction elastic, a chest pocket (which functions as a stuff sack) and even a "translucent sheen". Mr Raymond says: "There are lots of options out there without hoods, but we figure that in a high-mountain terrain you're going to need a hood."

For its part, the Airojohka is a three-layer lightweight backpacking and hiking shell. With a four-way stretch nylon outer fabric for freedom of movement, extended back, fixed hood, high collar, and laser-cut and welded waterproof seams, the jacket provides "optimum protection from the wind and weather and has excellent wicking properties", the Norwegian brand states. Ryan Raymond says he has been impressed by the levels of breathability the Airojohka offers. "The entire fabric is working on breathability," he says, "not just the holes." He also likes the zips on this jacket. There are zips under the arms, but they are 40 centimetres long and go way beyond the arm-pits, making it easier than usual for the wearer to regulate his or her temperature by means of ventilation.

Bottom line

There is also a new collection of trousers (pirate, capri and shorts) for hiking, climbing, and summer use. These have lightweight, moisture-wicking, quick-dry and four-way-stretch characteristics and come in a broad range of colours and designs for women and men. In Mr Raymond's opinion, the most important factor in achieving each of these performance properties is the blend of fabrics involved; they are 94% nylon and 6% spandex. This, and features such as a gusseted crotch, give him confidence the garments will work well for bouldering and mountain biking as well as for hiking. Aesthetically, there is a lovely touch in the pirate pants for women: the zip-line on the front pocket and the Bergans logo are picked out of the black trouser fabric in a series of fetching colours, including amethyst (violet) and bright red. A zip at the bottom of each leg allows the wearer to adjust the width, and even with the zip open, they "hang like trousers", Ryan Raymond says.

He insists that Bergans will continue to emphasise the technical side of its garments and will aim to achieve growth and to be increasingly relevant in the international outdoor marketplace by focusing on performance with the same attention to detail as it has done since Ole Ferdinand Bergan brought the brand into existence over a century ago. "We will never stop doing high-end outdoor clothing and equipment," Ryan Raymond says.

(Left:) The Airojohka is a lightweight hiking jacket that uses Toray's Dermizax NX, a premium non-porous waterproof, windproof and breathable membrane that Bergans Norway has been using for some time.

(Right:) Utne pants will work well for bouldering and mountain biking as well as for hiking, the brand says.

Bergans Norway

COPYRIGHT