



Luxury Vacations Start with Magnificent Destinations



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## SUMMER GADGET GUIDE

Stephen Regenold

June 20, 2008



LAUNCH SLIDESHOW

### A dozen delightful doodads to rev up your summer

His backpack loaded, his hiking boots laced tight—Roger Bischoff was heading uphill to rendezvous with a satellite. It was a Saturday in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State, and Bischoff, 37, a test manager at Microsoft, had promised his wife a communiqué halfway through the hike.

At a crest, nature spilled in all directions, the pine-choked Cascades coming alive as Bischoff began to send out a signal. In his hands, the **SPOT satellite messenger**, a GPS-based beacon, blipped a text message in an area where cellphones don't work. "It keeps me in touch," he says.

See our slideshow of Summer Gadget Guide.

For Bischoff—a tech-savvy hiker, climber and kayaker who works for the biggest software company on the planet—the gadget parade hardly ended with the GPS beacon. In his pack, Bischoff stowed a tiny, rugged video camera, the **POV.1 model from V.I.O. Inc.**; **solar-charging panels from Brunton Inc.**; and a Microsoft Zune MP3 player. Simultaneously, he could record video footage to post online, take still photographs, mark latitude and longitude waypoints and send data to his home email account via the SPOT satellite connection. He could even view his route later, using a cartographical program like Google Maps.

For outdoors enthusiasts like Bischoff, gadgets designed specifically for hiking, cycling, boating, surfing and mountaineering enhance the experience. Indeed, an infiltration of technology into recreation—from fish-finding wristwatches to backpacks with built-in speakers—has changed what's possible while canoeing down a creek, catching a wave or camping far off-trail in the woods.

Take John Bitton, for example. The 41-year-old hearing aid salesman and Boy Scout leader from New Mexico parts with no comfort when he heads to the mountains of Utah to camp at 10,000 feet. "We bring everything," he says, "even a hot-water heater to wash dishes."

Bitton's wilderness encampment, which goes up for a week each summer in an alpine meadow outside Vernal, Ut., is witness to

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backwoods extravagancies including Dutch ovens, coffee makers, 10-inch-thick air mattresses and a remote-control lantern for the tent. The group erects a portable kitchen, positions the propane-powered **Hot Water on Demand** spigot (a \$258 product from Coleman) and then prepares gourmet meals. Bitton says, "You wouldn't believe what we can do up there."

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Prefer adrenaline over appetizers? For action-driven personalities, products like the **D30 Armored L/S Crew top from Spyder** are proof that science and sport are now yoked together. The \$350 mountain-biking top—which goes with \$270 bike shorts—employs a shock-absorbing gel made by a U.K.-based chemical engineering company. The magic mixture, called d30, provides covert padding and protection by remaining flexible in normal use but seizing up as a solid pad when force is imposed.

While you're at it, don a pair of **sunglasses from Numa Tactical**. They incorporate a proprietary flexible fiber material in its frames, yielding glasses with bows so resilient that you can tie them in a knot.

In the following Summer Gear & Gadgets Guide, we debut a dozen new and innovative items, from the aforementioned unbreakable shades to a tent with power plug outlets. Use this gear to enhance your time outside this summer, be it at the beach or in the woods for a weekend of pampered camping. As Bitton puts it: "The right gear is hard to overdo."

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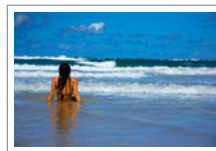
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