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The Gear Closet »

Stoves for the Trail

We test three of the new lightweight canister stoves

The Snow Peak GigaPower LI, otherwise known as The Crab, is a versatile, lightweight stove that burns canister fuel very efficiently.

Sometimes innovation inspires this gear column. Lately, there's been a design explosion that has dominated the stove market for the past few years, starting with the Jetboil PCS. The original Jetboil was lauded as a breakthrough in design, with its heat exchanger base claiming (correctly) improved fuel efficiency. Still, the PCS was primarily a high-tech water boiler, and the technology, frankly needed refining. Now we look at three canister stoves that are heating up the market today.

Snow Peak GigaPower LI

\$159

The Snow Peak GigaPower LI is the strangest looking contraption you could ever wish to see—part modern art sculpture, part bizarre metal contraption thingamajigger. Even Snow Peak admits it's weird: they have nicknamed it "The Crab," for reasons obvious if you turn your head *just* the right way and imagine it walking sideways across the ground toward you. This



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strange gizmo's a little tough to handle at first, but once it's set up, it begins to make more sense. The folding legs provide a nice, stable base, the broad burner heats your cookpot very evenly, and the remote canister burns right down to the last drop. Besides being a little hard to handle, the LI is a nice addition to the stove market.

Jetboil Helios

\$150 including 2-liter cookpot

I've always loved the idea of the Jetboil stoves, but found them a bit primitive and not versatile—great for boiling water, but not so much for other things. With my skeptical attitude firmly shoved in my back pocket, I took the Helios on a little trip to Eastern Washington for a windy weekend. It performed like a champ, with no regard for stiff winds. The Helios simmered won-

derfully, and had excellent manners not seen in earlier models. The integral cookpot has a heat exchanger built right into the bottom of the stove, and as such, the pot never gets hot. This is a great setup for a party of three or four.

The Jetboil Helios expands on the popular Jetboil concept, allowing for simmering and cooking for a group. It has an efficient heat exchanger built into the stove.



The Optimus Crux Lite Solo is an inexpensive, lightweight stove that's great for minimalists wanting to boil water for instant meals or coffee.

Optimus Crux Lite Solo Cooking System

\$59 including 0.6-liter cookpot and lid/tiny frying pan

At the other end of the spectrum, perhaps, behold the Optimus Crux Lite Solo cooking system. Included is the Crux Lite stove, one of the tiniest and most compact on the market. The set also includes a 0.6-liter cookpot, which is really more like an oversized coffee cup, and a frying pan/lid with a neat folding handle. It's a great setup for a solo traveler who almost would not bring a stove at all—a setup like this allows for hot water for coffee and dried meals. We didn't get a chance to try cooking regular food with this, but that's not its forte anyway. This is an ultra-compact, ultra-inexpensive, ultra lightweight (just 8.1 ounces for pots and stove) setup that will keep the minimalist's tummy filled with warm food. This is a system that might also work for emergencies or as a second stove in a larger party, perhaps paired with the Jetboil or Snow Peak stoves reviewed above. ♦