

Adult Toys

Autumn offers many good opportunities for buying toys. Getting ready for winter skiing? Avoid ski injuries by investing money and time in using the club-grade, cardiovascular workout machines *Body Trek* (\$3,595) or *Body Mill* (\$4,995) from **Cross Conditioning Systems** (800-344-0444). Both offer a non-impact means of simultaneously working those upper and lower body major muscle groups that have idled at the beach or golf course all summer.

Getting lost in any weather is much harder in a vehicle equipped with a modern on-board navigation system. The Acura 3.5RL, the BMW 750iL and the Oldsmobile Bravado are some of new models that offer this handy option. The route guidance system in the **Acura** 3.5RL (800-862-2872) is my favorite for convenience and functionality. The *Acura Navigation System* has a powerful computer with miniature disk drive, gyroscope sensor, and Global Positioning System (GPS) antenna and receiver. The sensors detect speed and direction. The GPS satellites provide exact location and time information. With this information the system can draw a color map picture on the center dash console display locating the car and any nearby ATMs, gas stations, airports, parks, shopping centers, golf courses and schools. By specifying an address or location, the computer will calculate the simplest, quickest route there automatically. It will then draw it on the map for you to follow or show directions and turns individually and provide voice prompts indicated turns.

For those flying to their lodges, **Garmin** (913-397-8200) makes a portable *GPSCOM 190* for pilots that holds a full Jeppesen database for airport and flight path information along with a digitized land map with highway, railway, and natural features that are displayed along with GPS information for easier and safer fuel and flight planning and trip navigation. With a 760-channel digital transceiver built-in, the 190 allows you to dial in every tower frequency directly from the GPS data base.

Traveling north is much easier using *Rain-X* from **Unelko** (800-542-6424). One of those very simple products that seem much too good to be true, *Rain-X* is a clear liquid that is applied to a clean, dry windshield every month, allowed to dry and polished off. *Rain-X* forms a super-slick, non-stick coating on glass or plastic which lets rain, sleet, and snow bead on contact and windstream off to drastically improve wet weather driving visibility. At speed, under many conditions its even unnecessary to use wipers!

At your chalet, cooking a fondue, grilling, or stir-frying is faster and easier with an *GMI 2000 Induction Cooker* from **Glowmaster** (201-843-8070). Available in restaurant supply stores, this cook top is the cousin of the commercial ones used in the kitchen at Lespinasse. An induction cooker stays cool itself while efficiently directing all the heat into cooking pan. More efficient than gas and more responsive than resistive electrical cook tops, this 1300 W unit will work in a normal 110V home electrical outlet and for experienced cook or leftover eater is handier and more useful than a microwave oven.

Despite power outages you can be sure of the exact time with a *Junghans Mega* mantel clock from **La Crosse McCormick** (800-346-9544), the most accurate clock in the world. With a stylish face by modernist Frog Design guru Helmut Esslinger, this clock picks up a daily signal broadcast from the

national time standard in Boulder Colorado. Maintenance-free, its time and calendar never have to be manually adjusted for daylight savings or leap year corrections. If only setting the VCR were this easy!

Keeping track of the weather is also easier with two tools from **Oregon Scientific** (800-853-8883). Their *Professional Weather Station* tracks local barometric pressure, wind speed and direction, relative humidity, wind chill, dew point and rainfall. Their new handheld *All Hazards/Weather Radio* finds the local NOAA weather channel that provides updated local forecasts, travel condition advisories and alerts for severe storms and other emergency conditions.

Timing your runs, will feel a lot more stylish wearing the Ventura Design *v-tronic* (\$1,400) from **Chelsea Marketing** (619-274-6400) with a case carved out of surgical steel and topped with a curved sapphire crystal. Designed by Hannes Wettstein, prize winning Swiss architect, it packs a lot more function and futuristic panache than the run-of-the-slope Tag Heuer or Breitling chronograph might.

With current technology you can run your business or at least manage your investments at your chalet. Notebook computers are the adult version of the addictive Nintendo "Game Boy." Like video games portable computers went through a recent spell of boring sameness. A new round of innovation is changing all that. A great example of what the new generation offers is found in the **Hitachi VisionBook Elite** (800-555-6820). It packs an Intel Pentium 166Mhz MMX processor, up to 80MB of DRAM, a 3.0 GB hard drive, a Glidepoint touchpad, a 56Kb modem, two PCMCIA slots, a Universal Serial Bus connector and a supersharp 13.3 XGA 1024x768 active matrix monitor into a carbon fiber body only five pounds and 1.4" thick.

One must have accessory is the new *Rex* PC companion from **Franklin Electronic Publishers** (609-386-2500). This credit card sized device plugs into a PCMCIA slot in a notebook computer and can download your entire (up to 2500 items) appointment calendar, to do list, and telephone directory. It easily fits in a shirt pocket or business card holder and can call up the stored information by tapping its own tiny LCD display screen.

Another PCMCIA card to have up your sleeve is the **New Media Netsurfer Duo** (800-227-3748). This adapter allows connection to either an ultra-high speed 128Kb ISDN line or a standard V.34 session on standard phone lines. This can be particularly useful for video conferencing using a tiny **Panasonic PM-S122 Clip-on notebook camera** (888-203-9689) which can also send video e-mail.

The best new software for your laptop is **Dragon Systems** (617-965-5200) *Naturally Speaking*. Ideal for those with a fear of typing, this program allows you to speak to your computer and dictate text faster (100-160+ wpm) with higher accuracy (>95%) than you can type. Unlike other "voice recognition" systems, this one allows continuous dictation rather than requiring a speaker to pause after every word. It also will "learn" your vocabulary by analyzing your documents for the words you use most often in your work.

Pack it all up into a **Glaser Designs Deal Bag** (800-234-1075). An ideal laptop carrier, it provides a padded protective structure for a computer, power supply bag, mesh dividers for files, pads, and

loose documents, and mesh garment bags for those extra **Ascot Chang** shirts, all in an elegant handmade leather bag.

*Joshua Shapiro is a New York-based high technology consultant. His articles on technology have appeared in *The Economist* and *The New York Times*.*