

**PROS**

- Fast, easy gate action
- Retainer bar kept device oriented and prevented cross-loading
- Light at 2.8 oz
- Versatile—compatible with all belay devices

CONS

- Some snaggage when removing from belay loop

Metolius Gatekeeper Autolock

\$20

Setting aside that I'm often accused of using my GriGri “backward,” I will concede that I've been in the “whatever locker is fine” camp with belay biners. But if you're a frequent cragger, you really need an anti-cross-loading carabiner—one that keeps the biner oriented vertically off your belay loop such that your device sits properly and the load comes onto the carabiner's major axis to prevent breakage in a violent fall.

Metolius has updated their original, screw-gate anti-cross-loading locker, the Gatekeeper, with an auto-locking sleeve. The original biner is green and weighs 2.46 ounces; the new one is blue and weighs 2.8. Both are hot forged and given a sleek, anodized finish. I tested the auto-locking version in the gym and cragging on the Front Range of Colorado, both for belaying and rappelling. In terms of reliability and handling, myself and partners were impressed.

The gate has a “triple-action auto-locking sleeve,” which translates to three steps to open: sliding the sleeve up, twisting it counterclockwise, and then crimping the gate. The action was smooth and easily accomplished with one hand, such as when managing a backpack, tools, draws and drill while setting up to equip a new sport climb. And boy does that gate close snappily upon release—watch those fingernails!

But it's belaying that matters the most, and the Gatekeeper reliably kept itself and my device oriented properly when the rope was weighted. Metolius has nailed form and function with the extended-pear shape, giving enough room to accommodate thick, old-school belay loops on the bottom, while keeping plenty of space up top so you can clip in larger devices like the original GriGri. The spine, which Metolius bills as “widened,” has a T-beam contour that was easy to grab, with or without gloves. The price is competitive at \$19.95, and with Metolius's emphasis on durability, the Gatekeeper will last you for years to come.

—Matt Samet

**PROS**

- Small secondary front point aids in stability
- Extremely light

CONS

- Cannot replace front points
- Unwieldy heel-bail adjustment

CAMP/Cassin Alpinist Tech Crampons

\$250

For most of my climbing career I've rocked dual-point crampons, but a couple of years ago I got with the times with mono-points. Yet even as I reveled in their precision on mixed terrain, sometimes I still pined for the solidity on ice that only a dual-point provides. Last winter I found the solution: Cassin's Alpinist Tech Crampon, which has a monopoint design and a shorter secondary point to aid in stability. While several other crampons, for example the Petzl Dart, also have a secondary point, the Alpinist Tech's is much more prominent.

The main mono-point is to the right of the big toe, not quite centered, with four teeth along its length. The secondary shorter point is on the outside of the foot. It has a flatter and wider profile, more akin to a point on a glacier crampon. The result was that I felt like my weight was better distributed along the width of the crampon's platform, but I still had the mobility of a mono-point. At first I was concerned the secondary point might get in the way while trying to sink the monopoint on dry-tooling routes, but on routes up to M8—my pay grade—I had no such problems.

At 810 grams underfoot, the Alpinist Tech is one of the lightest steel crampons out there. One of the most intriguing features—inherited from its forerunner, the dual-point Alpinist Pro—is that the toe platform and the front points are one integral piece, something common among glacier crampons. The result is that there is no flex or play at all between the front points and the platform.

This also happens to be the root of one of the Alpinist Tech's drawbacks: Unlike most technical crampons where the front points are removable, you can't swap out the front points on the Alpinist Tech; replacing the entire front piece will set you back \$100. That said, the points are durable and should last you many seasons—they only need sharpening a few times per winter, depending on how frequently you get out. Another minor gripe I had was the difficulty of the heel-bail height-adjustment tool. This is difficult to manipulate, particularly with gloves on. The rest of the systems for adjusting the size—several bail settings and a sliding bar to adjust the crampon's length—are niftily designed and easy to use.

These crampons are pricey at \$250, but their versatility on mixed terrain and pure ice make them one of the best new models around.

—Michael Levy