

Scarpa Diem

A review of the Scarpa Mescalito Mids GTX

Please forgive the bad pun but it was irresistible and in these uncertain times it's definitely a case of seizing the day. Scarpa's design and fit is perfect for my feet but I'd advise any potential purchaser to physically check footwear in store rather than just buying on line.



Mids in use guiding Pinnacle Ridge. Summit view to the Inaccessible Pinnacle



Mescalito Mids sitting idle during lockdown

Having been a visitor to the Cuillin for almost two decades I've put in a lot of miles and probably 95% or more has been in Scarpa footwear. It fits me well, does the job and helps me get on with mine. It's mainly down to fit but occasional forays using other makes of boots or approach shoes haven't been a great success. On the approach shoe front I've had multiple pairs of Scarpa Quests, Cruxes, Zodiacs and most recently the Mescalitos.





Mids waiting for action. Note "Climbing Zone" on sole by toe



Scarpa Mescalitos in use. Client and I on top of the Inaccessible Pinnacle



With the Mescalito setting a high benchmark, the Mids had a lot to live up to

There's nothing scientific or nerdy about my testing, simply many kilometres of walking and scrambling and thousands of metres of ascent. For many years I thought the Cruxes to be unbeatable but then along came the Mescalitos and the bar was raised.

For summer traverses of the Cuillin Ridge the Mescalitos seemed ideal; light, precise and comfortable. Good for walking, scrambling and climbing. Next came the Mescalito Mid GTX, a slightly different beast, with the same good points as the original but with added versatility.

Higher cut with ankle support they combine the advantages of a good approach shoe with those of a light boot. The goretex lining makes them more of an all weather footwear, something I've come to value with the post lock down rain on Skye. Since May 2018 I've been using the original Mescalitos and they seemed the perfect footwear. Combined with the Marmolada OD Pros meant I had all bases covered spring to autumn. Mescalitos for dryish weather, Marmoladas for wet. Before lock down Scarpa UK/The Mountain Boot Company kindly provided me with Scarpa Charmoz and the Mescalito Mids.



Mids in use guiding on 2nd top of Sgurr a Mhadaidh

Right from getting the Mescalito Mids out of their box I was fairly certain these were a game changer for me. Added ankle support, more comfort and waterproof. In the past month work has been busy, guiding a success story once lockdown eased in Scotland. Lots of kilometres and metres in Scarpa footwear, mainly the new Mescalito Mids.

Sgurr Mhic Choinnich and the In Pin x 2

Sgurr a Ghreadaidh and Sgurr a Mhadaidh

Sgurr Alasdair x 2

Sgurr nan Eag, Sgurr Dubh Mor, Sgurr Alasdair x 2

Sgurr nan Gillean and Am Bastier x 2

The Spur on Sgurr Fheadain

Sgurr a Mhadaidh, Sgurr a Ghreadaidh and Sgurr na Banachdich x 2

Pinnacle Ridge, Sgurr nan Gillean, Am Bastier, King's Cave Chimney, Sgurr a Bhastier

Pinnacle Ridge, Am Bastier and King's Cave Chimney

Pinnacle Ridge and West Ridge of Sgurr nan Gillean

Clach Glas- Bla Bhein traverse x 2

Cuillin Ridge traverse over two days.

For single days in the hills guiding the Mids seemed ideal but I wanted to hold off on putting pen to paper until they had faced the ultimate test of a multi day traverse of the Cuillin Ridge. Big packs, heavy loads, miles of scrambling, technical climbing pitches and all on the very abrasive gabbro rock, the ridge provided the perfect torture test.

Last Monday Colour Sergeant Jimmy Keenan of the Royal Marines and I caught the Misty Isle Boat from Elgol as our approach to the ridge. Jimmy was doing a comprehensive recce of the ridge prior to returning with troops. As such we not only did all the technical climbing pitches but also the bypasses thus the TD Gap climb and the easier bypass, King's Chimney and Collie's Ledges and so on. It was certainly a full on recce and a tribute to the professionalism of the Royal Marines. For me it was the most extensive and varied traverse I've ever done.

We planned for three days to allow for plenty of time and some leeway for bad weather. Conditions were testing being very hot and humid with poor visibility at times and some rain. As it was we moved fast and only took two days but both arrived at the end entirely happy with our footwear, me in the Mids and Jimmy in Scarpa Charmoz.



Guiding on Clach Glas. Clients both wearing Scarpa boots/shoes

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly; a summary of the Mids;

The Good:

1. Comfort wise these are as good as you can get. No problems even with long days carrying heavy loads in hot conditions. They are a lot more supportive than the standard Mescalitos and for me feel much more comfortable over longer days.
2. Extra support from the higher ankle was beneficial especially moving over rough terrain and screes and at the end of a long day when body and mind are tired and ankle injuries a more potential risk. The high ankle is a big bonus for impeding the ingress of small stones and dirt especially on the infamous Cuillin screes. I can only recall one occasion over the whole traverse when I had to stop to remove a stone whereas with low cut approach shoes it would have been multiple times a day.
3. The Mids have a bellows tongue a big step up from the original Mescalitos and it's much more comfortable, being unable to slide about and also great for keeping out dirt and debris and rain. A big thumbs up for this feature.
4. The sole unit of Vibram Megagrip works well. It's super grippy on dry rock so great for slabs and smearing yet edges well especially with the flat "climbing zone" by the toe. Slabs, cracks, face climbs and scrambling, the ridge has it all as well as miles of rough walking. The Litebase Vibram unit has chunky treads that work well on damp grass and mud.

5. The goretex lining is a real bonus but one that worried me prior to the traverse. For the last few weeks we've had lots of rain and it was great to have dry feet. The Mids proved perfect for long routes like Pinnacle Ridge and Clach Glas when we set off in clouds with either light drizzle and/or heavy overnight condensation on the vegetation and rocks. For days on end we experienced magical temperature inversions and we'd emerge onto a ridge high above the clouds. Almost as good as the stunning conditions was to arrive on the warm, sunny ridge with bone dry feet thanks to the goretex.

I have to admit to worrying that the Mids might be too hot or not as breathable as their non goretex brethren but these fears proved unfounded. Given the forecast, I wore slightly thinner socks than normal but given the hot and dry conditions with intense sun and blue skies my feet were fine. No problems what so ever and no noticeable difference to the standard Mescalitos even in hot and humid conditions.

The Bad:

1. They are obviously more bulky and slightly heavier than the standard Mescalitos. If they are being used literally as "approach shoes" to a climb then this may be a negative if you are going to have to climb with them clipped to your harness or in a pack. For routes like the Cuillin Ridge it isn't really a factor since they are versatile enough to keep on your feet for the entire traverse. Weight of size 42 is 1030g a pair compared to 780g for the standard Mescalitos

2. Cost. RRP is £200

The Ugly:

1. The colour scheme will either be loved or loathed by people. Personally, I like it but wish a wider range of colours were imported into the UK. Certainly from above, the uppers look very dull and it's a hard product to get stand out photos of. I'm quite jealous that the women's model comes in bright red that should look great in pictures.

This is a bit of a real world review and how the Mids performed in a tough environment over an extended period. Check out Scarpa's website for all the technical specs, details and buzzwords. The Mids are ideal for scrambling, long easyish climbs and tough walking. Presumably they'd be pretty good for Via Ferratas, as well.

The jury is inevitably still out on durability and long term robustness but if they are anything like the original Mescalitos then they should last well.

I thought Jimmy's choice of Scarpa Charmoz to possibly be over kill but he loved them, the extra support and comfort and excellent edging ability. If Scarpa's footwear fits you then it's worth putting their products on your shortlist. Over the last few years Ive been amazed at the number of clients turning up with Scarpa products and wouldn't be surprised to see as many pairs of Mids as I have the original Mescalitos.

Looking at the rain lashing down outside and the wind howling past, I'm glad to be able to have the opportunity to seize the day and enjoyed so many great hill days over the last month. The Mids sat idle during lock down but now have been thoroughly put through their paces.

Carpe Diem/Scarpa Diem



Happy client on Clach Glas traverse with view to Cuillin Ridge



Carpe Diem with Scarpa. Jimmy in his Charmoz setting off for the traverse



Mids at bivi site with view to In Pinn during two day traverse



Client's Scarpa Crux on descent to King's Chimney



Mids in use on Sgurr a Mhadaidh



Scarpa equipped clients on Clach Glas and Bla Bheinn





Jimmy abseils off Bidein



Mids below Bruach na Frithe as we stop for a brew near end of ridge