

Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 Snowshoe REVIEW

► A sprinter's dream with lightweight - although less durable - materials, narrow tapered tails, and an aggressive toe cleat.

BY Jay Ham

Introduction

The Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 snowshoes are svelte trail runners with a radically tapered frame that allow a natural running gait. The 12's have a smaller diameter tubing ($\frac{5}{8}$ inch) frame, lightweight bindings, aluminum alloy crampons, and clear Surlyn decking to lighten the weight (3.2 pounds per pair). While there are lighter weight offerings, performance features abound on the Gold Series 12. The question is, do the added features offset the weight?

What's Good

- The wide front and narrow tails concentrate weight close to the foot, yielding a lighter feel than snowshoes of similar weight
- Tapered shape allows a very natural running gait and makes it difficult to trip over one's feet
- Toe cleat makes it possible to sprint with excellent traction through a full foot roll
- TIG welded aluminum frame is very stiff
- Binding is light and flexible, and conforms well to lightweight running shoes

What's Not So Good

- Surlyn decking material is not as abrasion resistant as Hypalon
- Aluminum crampons wear faster than steel or titanium
- Rough looking pop rivet work on crampons (though worked flawlessly during testing)



Specifications

Manufacturer	Crescent Moon
Year/Model	2004-2005 Gold Series 12

Dimensions	8 in wide x 24 in long (20 cm x 61 cm)
Surface area	154 in ² (994 cm ²)
Frame	TIG welded 6063 aluminum alloy tubing, 5/8 in (16 mm) diameter, powder coated in gold metal flake
Deck	Translucent Surlyn (tested), Surlyn combined with TGS in 05-06 model
Binding	Foot-glove binding with two front straps and one heel strap, micro-adjustable with cam-lock buckles
Crampons	1/8 in (3.2 mm) thick hardened aluminum at toe, ball, and heel of the foot
Weight	Measured weight 3.2 lb (1.4 kg) per pair; manufacturer specification 2.9 lb (1.3 kg)
Load rating	Not rated
MSRP	\$199

Performance

I have not once tripped myself while wearing the Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 snowshoes. The narrow tail of these radically tapered frames allow a near natural running gait. The Gold Series 12s are crafted from a single piece of 5/8 inch tubular 6063 aluminum, TIG welded at the point in the back. The frames are finished with a very thick and durable powder coat.



Crescent Moon really tapers the frame on their Gold Series 12 snowshoes to accommodate a narrow running gait. I found it nearly impossible to trip myself wearing these.

Crescent Moon will use a combination of TGS (The Good Stuff) and Surlyn in their Gold Series 12 for the 2005-2006 winter season (the review sample from the 2004-2005 season used Surlyn throughout). TGS decking, used for the back half of the new Gold Series 12 has a polyester scrim core coated in a blend of PVC and neoprene. TGS is claimed to withstand abrasion and tears better than Hypalon and is flexible down to minus 70 °F. The TGS decking I tested while reviewing Crescent Moon's Gold Series 9 performed flawlessly during late season hikes that included stretches of bare rock and ground.

The Gold Series 12 tested were decked entirely with Surlyn material, which in the future will only be used for the transparent front deck. DuPont Surlyn seems an ideal material for racing snowshoes. It is a tough material in cold environments, not as abrasion resistant as Hypalon, but LIGHTER. The Surlyn decking shows more wear and tear after a season of use than the TGS decking under similar treatment. From a durability point of view, the switch to half TGS, half Surlyn decking might make sense. However, I would prefer Crescent Moon keep the full Surlyn decking on the Gold Series 12 to focus on performance rather than durability on these competitive race shoes.



The newest rendition of the Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 snowshoes uses a combination of their TGS decking for durability in the tail and transparent Surlyn in front to lighten the weight.

Sixteen rivets hold the decking onto the frame. Some of the rivet work looks crude, but this is only a cosmetic concern. The decking and binding rivets held tight through fairly abusive treatment, like late season running over patches of bare ground.

The Gold Series 12s are complimented with great anatomical bindings. The bindings are very light and conform well to lightweight running shoes. They also adjust to fit insulated pack boots if you prefer them. The binding wraps over the front of your shoes to create a toe box that prevents your feet from slipping forward and ensure repeatable foot placement. Three cam-lock buckles allow incremental adjustment to dial in the fit; two over the top of your shoe and one around the heel. Crescent Moon uses Hypalon for the binding straps for its non-absorbent, cold tolerant, and durability properties.



The three-strap anatomical binding on the Gold Series 12 conforms very well to lightweight running or hiking shoes. Non-absorbent, UV and cold resistant, and durable, Hypalon straps hold it all together.

Three sets of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick aluminum alloy crampons provide traction on the Gold Series 12. While the back two crampons are well designed for hard pack or powder, the standout is the front toe crampons. These allow you to dig in at the end of your running stride and kick off with traction. The traction would be very good without the toe cleat. With it, the traction is outstanding for a running snowshoe. The aluminum used for the crampons is softer than most types of rock, and as such tends to wear quickly.



Three sets of aluminum alloy crampons add lightweight aggressive traction. The toe crampon, although small in size, makes a huge difference when climbing or sprinting.

The Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 snowshoes use a strap style pivot that does not allow the snowshoes to drag with each step, an important feature for any running snowshoe. This style of strap also makes negotiating rough terrain easier. The downside to this is the amount of snow these snowshoes throw over one's backside. In deeper, softer snow, the Gold Series 12s warrant the use of waterproof or highly water resistant shell pants; not always the best thing to wear on a highly aerobic run.



Crescent Moon uses a stiff pivot strap (red strap connected to the frame) to keep the snowshoes from dragging the ground.

Obviously, the smaller surface area limits these snowshoes to harder snow. These are a poor choice for breaking trail in soft powder, but do well hiking backcountry ski trails on firmer snow. The 12s are great climbers; the toe cleat really adds a lot to climbing traction. Descents can be good too if conditions are right. The very narrow back section causes the back of the snowshoes to sink more into the snow on descents, leveling out the foot.

The Gold Series 12s are average performers on side-hills. They are narrow enough in the back that the heel crampon really digs in without the frame getting in the way. However, in hard snow the width at the front can make it difficult to walk with your feet level and straight. Slightly soft snow remedies the problem by allowing the front of the snowshoes to dig into the slope. If only we had that much control over our snow conditions.

What's Unique

Designed for runners with a narrow running gait, the Gold Series 12 has a radically tapered shape and additional aluminum toe crampons to aid in climbs and sprints.

Recommendations for Improvement

There are lighter offerings in the running snowshoe market, and the Gold Series 12 could be more competitive at a lighter weight. To do this, and retain the great performance features, Crescent Moon might look into using a thinner frame material (like 7000 series aluminum). Other components such as the decking, aluminum crampons, and bindings have sacrificed long-term durability for lighter weight, so why not reduce the frame's weight to match the durability of the other components? The current frame will almost certainly outlast all other components.

Thin titanium crampons would retain sharp points longer than aluminum in thin snow conditions. The weight difference would be negligible. Cost would be more. However, "titanium" is a familiar material to competitive racers, who are willing to pay more for

that additional edge.

Citation:

"Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 Snowshoe REVIEW," by Jay Ham. [BackpackingLight.com](http://www.backpackinglight.com/cgi-bin/backpackinglight/crescent_moon_gold_series_12_snowshoe_review.html) (ISSN 1537-0364). http://www.backpackinglight.com/cgi-bin/backpackinglight/crescent_moon_gold_series_12_snowshoe_review.html, 11/29/2005.