

Crescent Moon Gold Series 9 Snowshoe REVIEW

► Nice innovations including a shape that allows a more natural walking gait, but heavy.

BY Jay Ham

Introduction

Crescent Moon Gold Series 9 snowshoes are designed for lightweight, all-around performance. Their dramatically tapered shape stands out among a sea of bean-shaped and back-tapered shoes typifying the market. Crescent Moon also adds a toe cleat and cam locking heel strap to their bindings to improve traction and better secure the foot. The merits of these design innovations for walking in the flats are undeniable, but how well does this snowshoe perform in deeper snow and on steeper slopes?

What's Good

- Radically tapered shape allows easy walking without tripping over the leading shoe
- Toe box binding facilitates precise foot placement
- Toe cleat provides excellent climbing traction on steep slopes
- Durable materials and stiff frame

What's Not So Good

- Too heavy - the durability and binding design place the Gold 9s among our heaviest snowshoes tested
- Pop rivets look crude (though they worked flawlessly during testing)



Specifications

Manufacturer	Crescent Moon
Year/Model	2004-2005 Gold Series 9
Dimensions	8 in wide x 27 in long (20 cm x 69 cm)
Surface area	169 in ² (1090 cm ²)
Frame	TIG-welded 6063 aluminum alloy tubing, 3/4 in (19 mm) diameter, powder coated
Deck	TGS, a polyester scrim core coated in a blend of PVC and neoprene able to withstand -70 °F temperatures, and more

	abrasion and tear resistant than Hypalon. 05-06 model will use DuPont Surlyn for the upturned front section
Binding	Foot-glove binding with two toe area straps and one ratcheting heel strap (like those found on high end ski boots)
Crampons	Stainless steel at toe, ball, and heel of the foot
Weight	Measured weight 4.3 lb (1.9 kg) per pair; manufacturer specification 3.9 pounds (1.8 kg)
Load rating	Less than 190 pounds (86 kg)
MSRP	\$239

Performance

What really sets the Gold Series 9 apart from other brands of snowshoes is Crescent Moon's radically tapered frame. Crescent Moon creates their frames from a single 0.75 inch diameter piece of tubular 6063 aluminum, TIG welded at the tail tip. The frame is extremely stiff, more so than riveted designs. They finish the Gold Series 9 frame with a thick powder coat (red in the case of our review sample). The finish looks great, is extremely durable, and sheds snow very well.

The Gold Series 9s were some of the most maneuverable full-sized shoes we tested. The radically tapered shape concentrates most of the snowshoes' weight near the foot, greatly reducing the swing weight, and allows a more natural walking gait. It is difficult to trip over your other foot with this design, even intentionally. The Crescent Moon Gold Series 9s maneuver like a much smaller, lighter snowshoe.

Crescent Moon's black TGS (The Good Stuff) decking has a polyester scrim core coated in a blend of PVC and neoprene. This material is claimed to withstand abrasion and tears better than Hypalon, and is tested to be cold tolerant down to -70 °F. In use, I found the material at least as durable as Hypalon. I abused the material on several late season hikes, where snow melt exposed sections of rock and debris, with little damage to the material. The latest Gold Series snowshoes are decked with DuPont's Surlyn material at the front of the shoe to reduce weight. Surlyn is used to cover golf balls and coat snow plow blades. The material is tough and cold tolerant, and survived our tests of the Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 snowshoes (which use Surlyn for the entire deck).



The latest Gold Series 9 uses transparent Surlyn decking up front to lighten the weight. Besides looking cool, Surlyn is highly durable and cold tolerant, and held up well during our testing of the Crescent Moon Gold Series 12 snowshoes.

The decking is held onto the frame with 16 rivets. The rivet work looks rather crude, particularly those attaching the crampons. It looks like Crescent Moon uses rivets that are too long for the application, and crushes them down to secure the decking/crampons together. Concerned this might be a weak point, I attempted to physically remove the crampons with pliers (since snowshoeing hard didn't seem to have any affect on them). My concern for the rivets turned out to be unfounded; they are plenty secure to handle very rigorous treatment.

The bindings are anatomically designed for either a right or left foot. They are very comfortable and adjust to a variety of foot sizes - they adjusted to fit my wife's size 6 and daughter's size 1, as well as my own size men's 10). The binding wraps over the front of your boot creating a toe box to ensure guess-free, repeatable foot placement and to prevent "heel creep." Snowshoes without a toe box can allow the foot to slip forward when snowshoeing downhill.

The foot is secured in the binding with three straps. Two run over the toe area and are secured with non-ratcheting cam-lock buckles located on the outside of the foot. The heel strap is secured by a ratcheting cam-lock buckle. There is no nylon webbing on these shoes to stretch with wetting or ice up in the cold. Crescent Moon uses Hypalon for all binding straps, which is resistant to abrasion and UV, and remains supple over a wide range of temperatures. The culmination of these design elements makes for a very secure and comfortable binding. The ratcheting heel strap, in particular, really makes the fit secure. You can adjust to fit different shoe sizes, or dial in just the right fit with ease.



The Crescent Moon Gold Series binding consists of two cam-lock buckles over the foot, a ratcheting heel strap, and toe box in front to prevent the foot from moving too far forward.

Compared to other tubular frame snowshoes, the Crescent Moon Gold Series 9 snowshoes are competitively outfitted for traction with three sets of stainless steel crampons. All three sets have well designed teeth for traction - sharp enough for ice and long enough for powder. The standout is their addition of a toe crampon. I found the toe crampon very effective on steep icy climbs. Snowshoes lacking the toe crampon can cause you to change your walking style to concentrate weight onto the ball of your foot (where the traction is). With the added toe crampon, I could climb steep slopes more naturally, by rolling from the ball of my foot to the toe as I completed a step. The traction is better than average compared to other tubular framed shoes.



The Crescent Moon Gold Series 9 has three sets of steel crampons. The toe crampon, despite its small size, added a lot of effective traction on steeper climbs.

The Gold Series 9 uses a pivot strap that lifts the back of the shoes when hiking or stepping over obstacles. This design requires you to lift nearly the entire snowshoe with every step, but makes it easier to negotiate rougher terrain.



The pivot strap on the Gold Series 9 does not allow the shoe to drag much when hiking. Occasionally, this design allowed snow to be flipped up when moving fast.

The Gold Series 9s are great climbers in firm snow, performing a little better than average thanks to the toe crampon (slipping at around 35 degrees). The narrower back section improves straight-down descents as the tail tends to sink into the snow better, keeping the foot level.

The 9s are average performers on side hills. The lack of lateral crampons makes it difficult to maintain traction unless the snow is soft enough to allow the snowshoe to sink in and level out. The tapered shape accentuates the performance problems in harder snow. The tail end of the frame does not bite into harder side slopes as well as the front, and can slip downhill in those conditions.

Crescent Moon clearly has some design innovations that improve the performance of their snowshoes. The downside is the weight these innovations add. The Gold Series 9s tipped our scales at 4.3 pounds. While other similarly sized shoes on the market are heavier, Crescent Moon should look into ways to reduce the weight to be more competitive with lighter weight shoes.

What's Unique

The radically tapered design allows for a natural walking gait and the toe crampon adds a great deal of climbing traction, particularly on steep hard pack.

Recommendations for Improvement

Get the weight down. The maneuverability and binding fit are excellent, and the traction is very good for a tubular snowshoe. But at 4.3 pounds, the Crescent Moon Gold Series 9 snowshoes could be lightened considerably using lighter materials in the frame and binding, without sacrificing durability or performance.

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