



► **Patagonia Capilene 2 Crew Long Sleeve Zip T.** \$43 at REI.
Prana Flow Crew. \$40 at Great Outdoors.



Base layer

High-tech is everywhere in new outdoor wear. **The North Face Vortex Tee** is great for hot hikes or as a warm base layer (\$35). Some TNF T-shirts boast body mapping – varying fabric thicknesses in various places to retain or dissipate heat and wick perspiration (such as **The North Face Translution**, \$40) – and antimicrobial properties that fight odor. Other companies have similar versions. Example? **Flow Crew** by Prana (\$40). For a warmer first layer, try the **Patagonia Capilene 2 Crew Long Sleeve Zip T** (\$43). And wool is back – in soft, moisture-wicking, high-tech garments such as SmartWool's long-sleeve, stylish M Bent Crew (about \$70).

► **Online Extras**
Get a handle on the latest gear – packs, camp stoves, trekking poles and more – at **WWW.CHARLOTTE.COM/travel**.

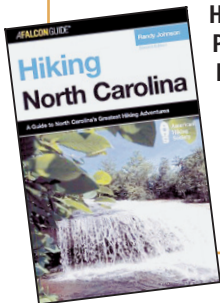
About the Writer

Randy Johnson is author of **Hiking North Carolina**, which has been updated and expanded; it will be released in November (\$19.95, Falcon). His other books published



Johnson

by Falcon include **Hiking the Blue Ridge Parkway and Best Easy Day Hikes Blue Ridge Parkway**. Info: www.randy-johnson-books.com.



Mid-layer

Down is back for the best in vests. Go for the **REI Generator vest** (\$79). Or try high-tech, superlight insulations. Mountain Hardwear's Windstopper blocks any breeze (\$95) and turns a shell into a warm jacket.

Shell

Ultralight helps get you up the trail. It's "look ma, no stitches" with The North Face Diad jacket. Seams are welded in this 100 percent waterproof, Star Trek-looking rain shell – at just 7 ounces! (\$200). Also available from The North Face is the **Venture jacket** (\$99).

Pants

Zip-off leg trail pants are perfect for changing fall temperatures. Choose by features – the best include big cargo pockets and are water repellant, fast-drying and UV-protective. Many companies have 'em. Consider REI's Sahara convertible (\$55) and the **Paramount pant** (\$65) from The North Face.

◀ **REI Generator Down Vest.** \$79 at REI.
The North Face Translution. \$40 at Great Outdoors

► **The North Face Paramount Convertible pants.** \$65 at REI.



► **The North Face Venture jacket.** \$99 at Great Outdoors.
The North Face Vaporwick. \$35 at Great Outdoors.



Socks

Wool's back on foot, too. Teko's EcoMerino Wool hiking sock, and a light version, feature the soft, long-fibered wool of Tasmania's premium sheep. Also look for **SmartWool**. High-tech helps Thorlo's thick, multipaneled trekking socks (\$15.99) absorb pressure and wick moisture (to properly fit new hiking boots, wear these while buying). Their lighter socks also range through levels of shock absorption.

◀ **SmartWool hiking socks.** \$16.95 at Jesse Brown's Outdoors.
Merrell Chameleon II Wrap Gore-tex XCR. \$120 at Jesse Brown's Outdoors.



Footwear

Take to the woods in running shoes if you're hiking the Blue Ridge Parkway's "leg-stretcher" trails. If not, you still don't need heavy hiking boots. Today's mantra is strong, light, breathable and modestly priced. Example: the Savant 510 (\$89). Merrell makes various light shoe/boots that you'll wear year-round. The Paddage Ventilator Mid will coolly carry you through summer, too (\$110). Even lower cut is the **Merrell Chameleon II Wrap Gore-Tex XCR**. And the Scarpa Enigma is in the same class (\$130). Backpacking with the kitchen sink? Try the Lova Biomex Tectrek GTX. Awesomely engineered, with a plastic cuff to resist turned ankles, but light (\$270).