

# BACKPACKER

THE MAGAZINE OF WILDERNESS TRAVEL

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## ANTISKID STABILICERS SOLES

Ice-climbing gear—crampons, ice axes, screw anchors, and the like—has dramatically improved during the past two decades, lending unprecedented security to the brave few who risk their polypro-covered necks climbing glaciers, frozen waterfalls, and mountains.

But in the cold down-to-earth world of winter, far more people risk life and limb hiking frozen trails and traversing icy streets and sidewalks. On any given December day, pedestrians in peril outnumber all the alpinists who've ever touched a crampon. Yet these huddled masses yearning to walk freely have lacked truly effective skid protection—until now.

Stabilicers are like river sandals crossbred with studded snow tires. The steel-cleated soles strap onto regular footwear; I've tried my Stabilicers on street shoes, hiking boots, Sorel pacs, and telemark ski boots. The hook-and-loop web attachment straps are easy to don or doff, and they hold the studded soles to boots surprisingly well. The textured top surface of the soles keeps the Stabilicers stable under your boots.

Stabilicers grip tenaciously on snow or ice, yet don't impede traction on rocky trails or dry pavement. Their Vibram soles bristle with deep chevron-shaped lugs and soccer-style cleats armed with 20 screw-head studs. On ice, you feel unstoppable, at least until the angle verges on technical terrain (Stabilicers are definitely *not* crampons, after all). On hard-packed snow, you can chug uphill like a Snowcat.

The soles come in five sizes and can be adapted to most footwear. Fit them the same length or slightly shorter than your boot soles, otherwise the protruding toe flap will collect snow and/or trip you face first onto the icy stuff.

Hikers will find Stabilicers a boon on ice-bound trails, as will skiers attempting to cross those skating rinks that masquerade as parking

lots. When your newfound ice-stomping enthusiasm wears down the Stabilicers cleats, just stop at the hardware store for a handful of fresh sheet-metal screws to replace the worn studs.



**Stabilicers: a quick trip to the hardware store will renew the soles' traction.**

What I've found most intriguing is that Stabilicers lend themselves ideally to a novel form of winter athletics: river walking. I live near Rocky Mountain National Park, where winter turns the creeks and rivers into smooth, well-paved, but slippery byways that lead me to places almost unreachable on foot any other time of year. What a delight to soak up creek-canyon silence in the dead of winter, treading securely as the cleats crunch into the crystalline pathway underfoot. —Steve Komito

*Stabilicers, about \$40. They're available at sporting-goods stores or from 32 North Corp., 10 Oak Bluff Dr., Kennebunk, ME 04043; (207) 846-7822.*