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Kizik Growing Hands-Free Outdoor-Focused Footwear Lineup

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The hands-free Kizik Wasatch trail shoe now comes in a mid-top height, part of a growing outdoor lineup from the brand.
KIZIK

The newest addition to the Kizik hands-free outdoor lineup is a snow boot, the first-ever slip-in style on the market. As the hands-free footwear manufacturer continues to see growth, it has put a focus on creating a fresh stable of outdoor-first options with its proprietary technology, giving consumers options for the snow, the trail and the wintry urban environment.

“The main challenge has been designing functional, attractive shoes while still maintaining the integrity of our hands-free technology,” Craig Cheney, Kizik’s chief innovation officer, tells me about the expansion into the outdoors. “We believe every shoe can be hands-free, but the approach to designing around tech is a unique challenge—and one we feel we have really tackled beautifully.”

Kizik launched as the first hands-free shoe brand in 2017 based on patents filed by Mike Pratt in 2009. The tech gained traction as Nike licensed the technology for use in its products in 2019. Kizik, though, continued creating its own line of shoes, starting with leather options in 2017 and by 2020 having designed the casual Madrid model featuring the brand’s “Cage” hands-free technology internally. In 2021, the

brand moved the Cage externally in the Athens, still the brand's top-selling silhouette.

The Juno Snow Boot from Kizik is the first hands-free snow boot on the market.
KIZIK

To help make it all happen outdoors, Kizik employed its Cage technology to ensure a mid-top or high-top shoe could remain hands-free. "The Cage is designed to offer dynamic movement through compression and responsive rebound to allow the foot to slide into the shoe and lock the heel in place," Cheney says. "This dynamic motion is key to the boot design as it prevents slipping and sliding around, allowing for a secure and supportive fit."

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The Cage was also designed to take plenty of abuse. Using proprietary TPU material, the component geometry allows the heel of the shoe to compress over one million times without damage, all while providing fit and function, Cheney says.

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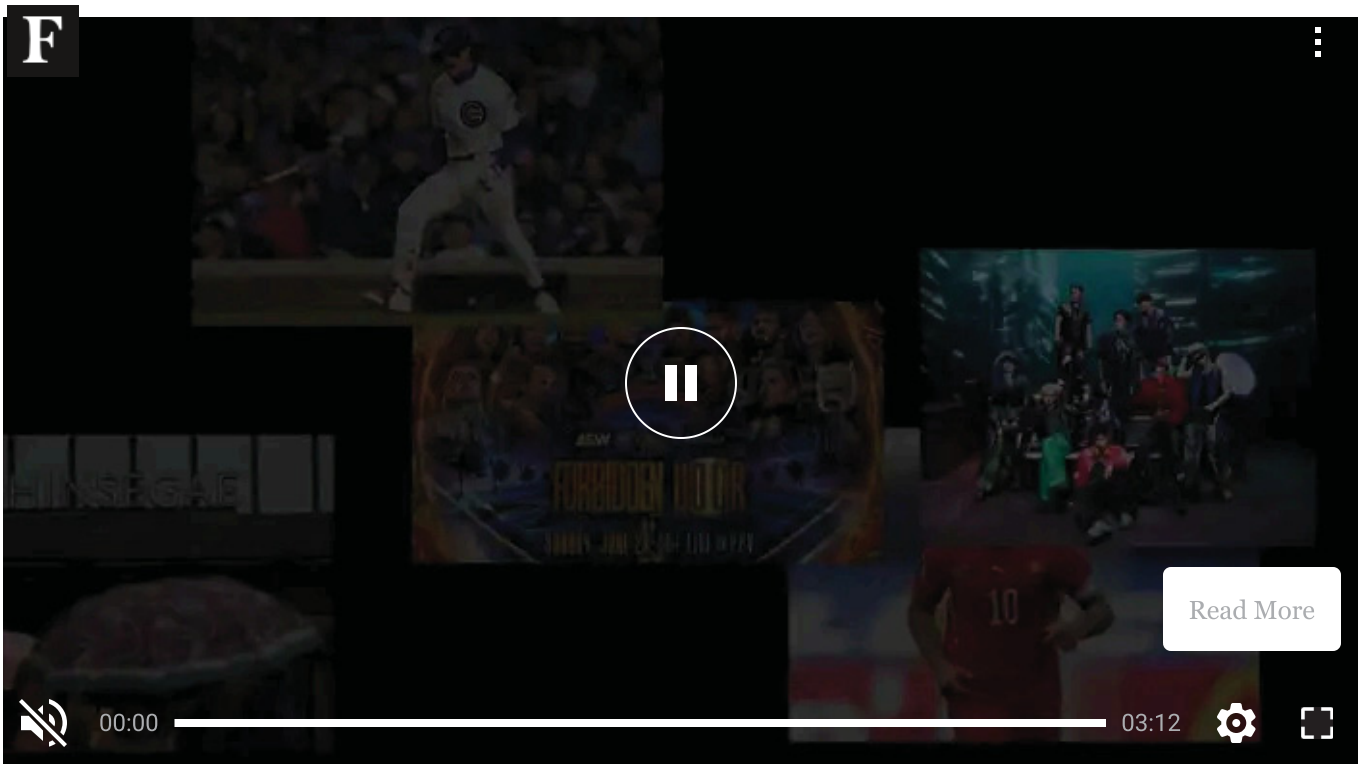
Moving the technology into larger—and taller—silhouettes required of outdoor footwear meant rethinking how the brand approached the technology. "When creating a mid-top or high-top article of footwear we are focused on support and retention in order to give customers the performance that they want," Cheney says.



The hands-free Boulder boot from Kizik expands the brand's outdoor lineup.
KIZIK

It isn't a one-technology-fits-all situation for Kizik and parent company Fast Labs, which has over 200 patents filed and 20 unique hands-free solutions. "When we evaluate the needs of a shoe, we select from the core use case and end user needs," Cheney says. "Of the many solutions we have, each was designed with real constraints that helped to form the final solutions."

That's why the Cage has become one of the technologies of choice for Kizik's outdoor lineup, which now has four distinct models.

Kizik first debuted the Juno snow boot as a limited offering in fall 2023, but 2024 is now a time for the outdoors to shine. The Juno makes a full retail return in a lightweight, water-resistant design in both tall and mid sizes. Also new in 2024 is the trail-ready Boulder boot for men and the Sierra boot for women, both with more urban-focused styling with ballistic nylon and nubuck leather. The Wasatch trail shoe has also grown in 2024, now with a new mid-height version.

Hands-free entry into Kizik's Wasatch trail shoe.
KIZIK

Cheney says the brand really focused on support and performance in the Wasatch, all while creating a shoe with stretch for hands-free needs, “a non-traditional solution that has allowed us to comfortably fit a wider range of calf sizes, particularly larger calves, to create a more comfortable fit.”

It all adds up to Kizik showcasing a fresh focus on the outdoors in 2024. “We’ve seen tremendous growth in our outdoor line,” Cheney says. “The hands-free technology is really showcased in our boots, which solves a friction point in any boot-wearer’s life. This really makes our hands-free offering ‘click’ immediately in consumers’ minds.”

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