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**OSPREY PACKS**

This Cortez company makes gear bags for all purposes: day packs, large expedition packs, and specialized technical packs. Osprey has earned a reputation for comfort, durability, functionality, and ability to carry heavy loads — *Outside*, *National Geographic Adventure*, and *Backpacker* have sung its praises. Osprey began in California in 1974, but later relocated to the San Juans. In 1990, Osprey moved into a former Gore-Tex factory in Dolores, Colorado, and, in 1994, to Cortez. Today, while some of Osprey's operations have moved overseas to Vietnam, the company retains strong ties to Colorado, even incorporating LEED green building principles, such as energy and water conservation, reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and improved indoor environmental quality. [ospreypacks.com](http://ospreypacks.com)



### SKIRT SPORTS

Launched in September 2004 by triathlete Nicole DeBoom, Boulder-based Skirt Sports features stylish exercise clothing for women. DeBoom came up with the idea when she was out for a training run and wondered why women's sports apparel couldn't be feminine and performance-based. Skirt Sports also launched the nationwide Skirt Chaser 5K race series, which includes an event in Denver in August. The company's line of tops, bottoms, dresses, and outerwear includes the Kendall Kollection — five pieces with a signature floral print — named for Kendall Sierans, an inspirational 6-year-old whose cancer is now in remission, and proceeds from its sale benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. [skirtsports.com](http://skirtsports.com)



**MELANZANA OUTDOOR CLOTHING**

With a name that means "eggplant" in Italian — a tongue-in-cheek reference that grew out of the founders' status as self-described "pretend fashion designers" — this Leadville-based company makes hoodies, vests, long- and short-sleeve shirts, pants, hats and other outdoor clothing, all from Polartec fabrics. True to the company's mantra of being "original, functional, soulful," a handful of people design, cut, sew, and sell everything the company makes. What was once a five-person company has grown to include 12 employees, including eight sewers and one full-time cutter. Last year, they turned out nearly 17,000 garments. Not bad for a homegrown, low-impact, no-foreign-labor business model with a less-is-more mentality. [melanzana.com](http://melanzana.com)



**BACKCOUNTRY ACCESS**

Backcountry Access is perhaps best known for its Tracker avalanche beacon/transceiver — likely the most widely used beacon in the Rockies when the snow starts to fall and slides are a concern. The Boulder-based company also makes shovels, probes, and climbing skins for skis. Founded in a Boulder garage in 1994 by Bruce McGowan and Bruce Edgerly, BCA has become a heavyweight in the world of avalanche safety. Recently, BCA developed the Float 30 Avalanche Airbag, which allows the user to pull a ripcord attached to a compressed air canister that inflates a giant airbag. Ideally, the airbag carries him or her to the top of the snow, minimizing the potential of getting buried. In addition to in-house research on snow science, the company is also deeply committed to education. Throughout Colorado, there are 10 BCA beacon training parks that allow you to practice your skills. As the company mission declares, the foremost emphasis isn't selling products — it's saving lives. [backcountryaccess.com](http://backcountryaccess.com)

