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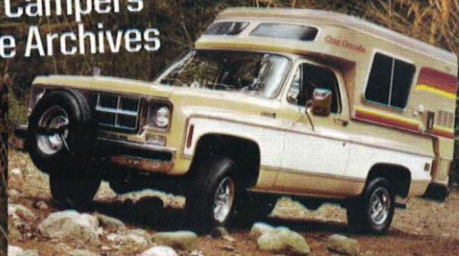


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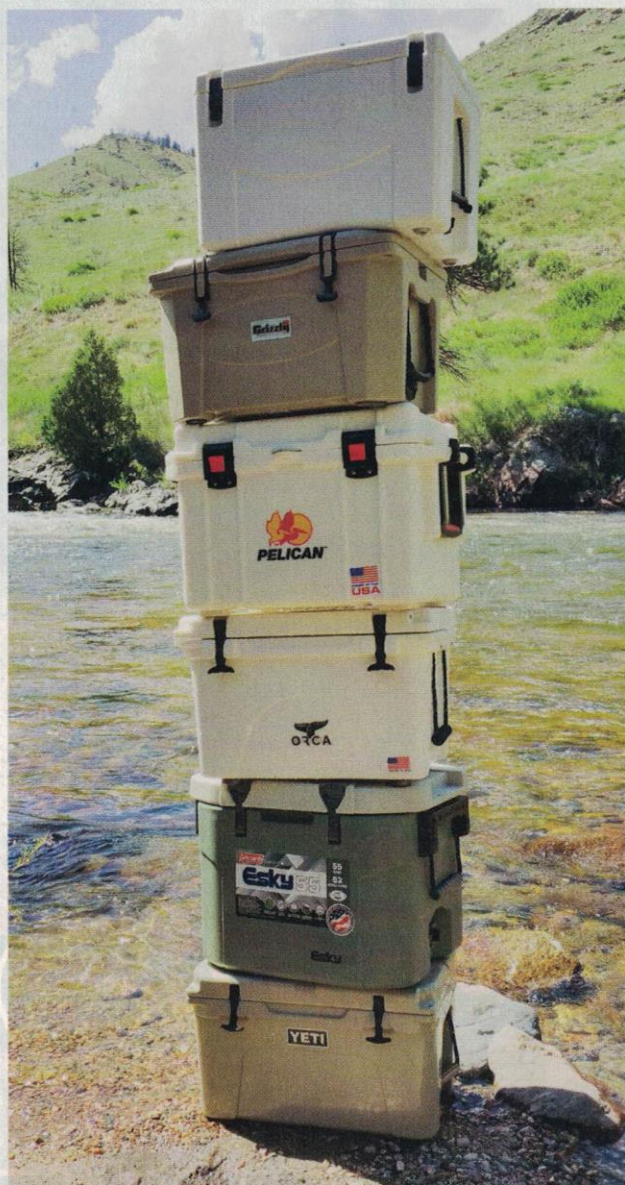
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THE EXTREME OUTDOOR COOLER SHOOTOUT



When cold drinks and fresh food trump the dollar

By Derek Lobato editor@fourwheeler.com Photography: Derek Lobato

THE LAST THING YOU WANT IN A COOLER IS FOR ALL YOUR FOOD GETTING watered down because it can't hold ice for more than 24 hours in extreme conditions. These days, there is certainly no shortage of extreme outdoor use coolers on the market with which this isn't a problem. For a dedicated outdoorsman it's a must-have item. And whether you're into moderate off-roading, serious overlanding, hardcore rockcrawling, camping, fishing, or just tailgating and barbecuing, a durable, well-built cooler should be in your gear arsenal no matter what time of year. Keeping drinks cold and food fresh while you're in the outdoors can make your favorite outdoor activity much more enjoyable. We've taken what we feel are the Top Six extreme outdoor-use coolers through a Northern Colorado adventure to find out which cooler belongs in your trail rig. These coolers were in and out of our Jeep Wrangler on the trail for long, hot summer days, hanging around the campfire, out on the river, and suffering all sorts of adventure-based tortures.

For this test, we requested that companies supply a 40-quart cooler size (or as close to it as possible) for an apples-to-apples comparison. All are certified Grizzly Bear-proof by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (there really is such a thing!), lockable, durable, and fit into the extreme outdoor-use category.

Ice Retention Test

Coolers were chilled overnight with 10 pounds of sacrificial ice and then emptied. For the test, they were loaded with 20 pounds of ice with drinks filling the remaining space. Ambient temperature for the testing was about 70 degrees, and they were all opened twice per day for the duration of the test to check for melt. Keep in mind the warmer outside air enters and melts ice.

It took 3 days before we started seeing some separation in performance. After 5½ days, the Esky 55 and the Grizzly G40 had no ice remaining. After 6 days Yeti's Tundra 45 had no ice remaining. After 6½ days, the Pelican Elite 45 and Orca 40 had no ice remaining. The Pelican slightly edged out the Orca. At the end, only the Canyon

Coolers' Outfitter 35 met the full 7-day mark successfully. We had a winner, and it wasn't a cooler you see immediately walking into your local sportsman's warehouse. From this test (as well as using all of the coolers in multiple outdoor excursions), we've found they all offer great performance and if you plan well and use as much ice as possible, including crushed and block, you'll get the most out of your investment. But let's not forget, this is the #ExtremeOutdoorCoolerShootout and we're crowning a champion!

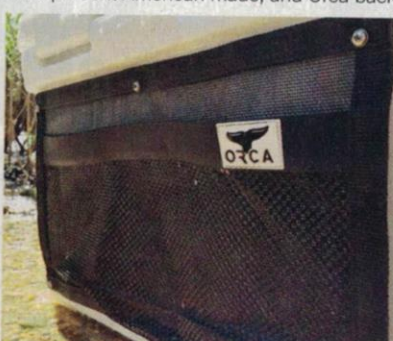
Our Ranking System (20 Stars Possible)

- ★★★★★ Belongs in your gear arsenal
- ★★★★ Elite performance
- ★★★ Respectable, but lagging a tad in this group
- ★★ Pass on this cooler, not worth it
- ★ Awful, we weren't impressed

ORCA Coolers Wilderness 40-quart \$349.99 MSRP

Colors Available: White, Army Green, Tan, Pink

This cooler is a true 40-quart size, ranked Third in ice retention, and has some seriously comfy rope handles that makes two-person carrying a snap. It has a little bit of an odd shape and was somewhat difficult to pack into our loaded JK Unlimited. If you're a Jeep soft-top owner, this cooler doesn't slide under your tailgate bar. We imagine this cooler being more at home out on the lake than on the trail. It comes with a big cargo bag mounted to the back for storage and has a nice rubber sealing gasket to keep air out. We don't care too much for the softer rubber whale-tail latches. The whale-tail latches stay decently tight but give you the feeling you could pop open the lid without unlatching them; they're really soft. The construction is roto-molded plastic with integrated insulation to maximize ice retention. Every component integrated into this cooler is 100 percent American made, and Orca backs every one of its Grizzly-proof coolers with a lifetime warranty.



Warranty ★★★★★ Can't argue with a lifetime guarantee.

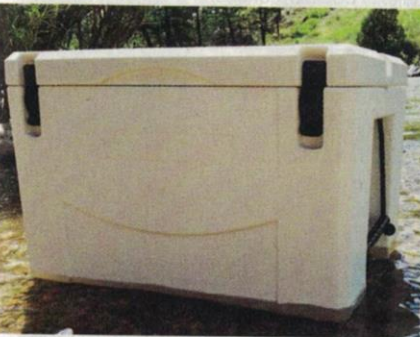
Value ★★★★★ At \$349 retail, it's not the best value out there but a good one.

Ice Retention ★★★ 6½ days of ice retention, we thought that was pretty awesome.

Features ★★★★★ The cargo bag bolted to the back is a unique feature, and we like the rope handles a lot.

Total Score: 17 Stars

Canyon Coolers Outfitter 35-quart \$239.99 MSRP



Colors Available: White, Sandstone, White Granite, Green & White

The Outfitter 35 has a super-sleek, smooth, no-snap design with recessed mounted latches that seem to keep the 3-inch-thick lid and rubber gasket secured down tightly. Our First-ranked cooler in ice retention also has

durable non-skid rubber feet and a no-lose drain valve. The Outfitter 35 sports a brutally tough roto-molded shell insulated by 2¾-inch-thick HuntX pressure-injected foam and is backed by a lifetime warranty. The Outfitter 35 comes in with the smallest price tag out of our group. There's no question this burly little cooler is a fantastic value at a true 35-quart capacity. It is easily carried by one person and also has rope handles for two-person carry scenarios. We would like to see the plastic portion of the rope handles beefed up a bit and wrapped with a more comfortable, grippy exterior like some of the others.

Warranty ★★★★★ Recently stepped up to a lifetime warranty.

Value ★★★★★ The best value in this group, true 35-quart-capacity, the least expensive cooler out of the six we tested, awesome performance and features, and a lifetime guarantee. Awesome deal!

Ice Retention ★★★★★ Seven days of ice and Number One in our test. Super-thick walls and lid. Very impressive.

Features ★★★★★ The recessed latches that stay super tight, the sleek, smooth exterior, and an attached no-lose drain valve means on the trail this cooler is not hanging you up or slowing you down.

Total Score: 19 Stars

Pelican Products Elite 45-quart Cooler \$300.00 MSRP



Colors Available: White, Tan

We ended up liking this cooler a lot more than we thought we would. It's pretty big and bulky and actually holds closer to 50 quarts. But for BBQ fixings and fresh fruit and vegetables up on our camping trips, this cooler was awesome! Food was

fresh and cold for days. We saw very little ice melt over a weekend in the mountains, and this beast ranks Second in ice retention. It has molded in tie-downs/handles as well as solid plastic hinged handles. Just don't attempt to pick this cooler up from the front or the steel-plated tab for its padlock will likely gouge you right in the shin or stomach. That thing sticks out like a dagger. The latch system is big and push-button style, which makes it easy to operate with gloved hands and secures down the freezer-grade rubber gasket. The body of the cooler is insulated by 2-inch-thick polyurethane, and the lid has a 21-inch ruler on it. It has a nice threaded drain for hoses to be attached, and just like Pelican's world-class protective cases, its coolers are made in the USA and guaranteed for life.

Warranty ★★★★★ Lifetime guaranteed.

Value ★★★★★ \$300 for a large 45-quart cooler with serious ice retention capabilities. Great value.

Ice Retention ★★★★★ 6½ days of ice and edged out a Number Two spot in our test.

Features ★★★★★ Loaded with features just like Pelican's protective cases. The lock tab up front should be flush mounted like the rest.

Total Score: 18 Stars

Grizzly Coolers G40 \$339.99 MSRP



Colors Available: Tan, Army Green & Tan, White, Seafoam Green, Sandstone

Now a household name in the extreme outdoor use cooler industry, you can usually find the crew from Grizzly Coolers at off-road events, as it strongly supports the off-road industry. The G40 is

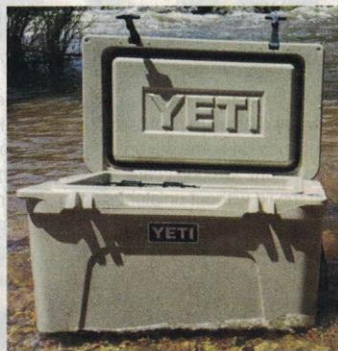
a true 40-quart cooler with some durable features. We love the bear-claw rubber latches as they're virtually indestructible and require no maintenance. They also wrap around the cooler body and keep the lid very tight. In our ice retention test the G40 held ice for 5½ days, which is just below the 6½ days Grizzly advertises on its site for this model filled to max capacity. In fact, on a separate occasion we filled the G40 with 20 pounds of crushed ice and a 10-pound block and saw 6 days. Its Roto Tough rotationally molded construction is pressure injected with environmentally friendly insulation. The tough rope handles are sleeved with nylon and make two-person carrying comfortable. We found this cooler very easy to haul in and out of our JK, even when loaded. The G40 was the only cooler that slides under a Jeep Wrangler tailgate bar and has super-deep molded-in handles. Draining was easy with the huge 2-inch drain plug, and even if some water is at the bottom of the cooler Grizzly supplies a dry goods basket to keep your lunch dry and cold on the trail. If snagging rainbows on the river is your thing, then you'll love the 22-inch molded in ruler on the lid. One of our favorites, with no shortage of quality, durable details.

Warranty ★★★★★ Grizzly's slogan says it all, "For A Lifetime".
Value ★★★★★ At \$339.99, we think it's a deal and you're getting your money's worth.
Ice Retention ★★★ Pretty good ice retention but was outlasted by a few others.
Features ★★★★★ Awesome, durable features all the way around, nothing overlooked.
Total Score: 18 Stars

YETI Coolers Tundra 45 \$349.99 MSRP

Colors Available: White, Tan, Ice Blue

Yeti's Tundra 45 has been its hot seller for a lot of years, and the company is probably the most well-known outdoor cooler brand. We were expecting a 45-quart cooler; however, it's not a 45. It's actually a 37-quart cooler, which is fine, but why call it a 45? Of course, Yeti advertises that the 45 is the series and not the quart capacity. Either way it's pretty confusing. Yeti now offers the shortest warranty out of this group we tested, which is surprising coming



from the company that basically started the extreme outdoor cooler category. We recently found out Yeti has a manufacturing facility in the Philippines, as well as two in the USA. On its website, it recommends calling direct if you'd like to make sure you purchase a cooler made in the USA. The Tundra 45 is stacked with patented features including military-grade rope, grippy rubber handles, non-slip bear-foot cooler feet, and an included dry goods basket. Yeti also sends you a nice

steel bottle opener as a gift once you register your purchase online. Its T-Rex lid latches are patented and very strong and seal the rubber gasket down nicely. Fourth in our ice retention test at six days, Yeti's roto-molded coolers are pressure injected with 2-inch-thick insulation in the walls and 3 inches in the lid made from commercial-grade polyethylene. Definitely a pioneer in this category, we simply believe there are better values out there nowadays.

Warranty ★★★ Five Years. We contacted Yeti and there are no plans on changing the warranty.
Value ★★★ The most undersized. Shortest warranty out of this group, largest price tag, and the only cooler that's not 100 percent made in the USA.
Ice Retention ★★★★★ Pretty great ice retention and insulation on this unit, although the walls are thinner than others we tested.
Features ★★★★★ No shortage of durable features.
Total Score: 15 Stars

Esky Series 55-quart \$339.99 MSRP



Colors Available: White, Khaki

The Esky 55 has some really cool features you won't see on any other cooler we tested. Under both integrated handles you'll find steel bottle openers built in, luckily it has nice rubber and rope handles as well for more comfortable carrying. The bottle opener handles, however, aren't as hand friendly as you could imagine. Open up the lid and there's a cutting board that slides out making this cooler a tailgating beast. The interior lining and cutting board contain

antimicrobial additives that resist odor and mold buildup. The Esky 55 is oversized and actually holds 57 quarts. Dry goods stay cool in the supplied basket, and when it is time to drain water, there's a dual drain with a threaded portion to attach a hose if needed, as well as a 2-inch-wide standard drain. The warranty on this unit is six years, and they are made in the USA. The Esky 55 has durable flush-mounted rubber latches, although packing it in our JK for a camping trip was no easy feat as it is huge and heavy when loaded. If you haul your trail rig on a trailer and have a big truck bed, then this is the cooler for you. Ice lasted 5½ days during our test with 20 pounds of ice and drinks. Esky advertises 6.8 days on its website, which seems realistic if it was filled to max capacity. On a separate occasion, we filled it with 20 pounds of crushed ice and a 10-pound block and saw 6½ days. The insulation on the lid and floor is 2½ inches thick, and the walls have 2-inch-thick insulation. There is room to spare in this cooler.

Warranty ★★★★★ Six-year warranty on Esky Coolers.
Value ★★★★★ \$339.99 for a large cooler with a ton of features. Good deal in our book.
Ice Retention ★★★ Pretty good ice retention but thinner walls and insulation than other models we tested. Uses a lot of ice in this cooler.
Features ★★★★★ We really like the unique features the Esky 55 offers.
Total Score: 16 Stars

Final Results

Look, what we've established here is that all of these coolers are durable products made with the outdoor enthusiast in mind. There is certainly fantastic ice retention that can be achieved with all of them. The key is to use the best balance of contents and ice you can, with more ice being better. Being we're Jeepers and wheelers, we value coolers that fit and load into our rigs easily, perform great in extreme conditions, and also offer great value because let's face it, a lot of our budget is tied up in parts. The extreme outdoor cooler market is very competitive nowadays and there are plenty of choices out there. We hope our project will shed some light on what to look for in choosing the right outdoor cooler for you.

SOURCES

- Canyon Coolers**
866/558-3267, canyoncoolers.com
- Esky Coolers**
800/835-3278, eskyseriescoolers.com
- Grizzly Coolers**
800/553-0050, grizzlycoolers.com
- Orca Coolers**
888/640-6722, orcacoolers.com
- Yeti Coolers**
512/394-9384, yeticoolers.com

- First Place:** Canyon Coolers Outfitter 35
- Second Place:** Grizzly Coolers G40 & Pelican Elite 45 Qt Cooler
- Third Place:** Orca Coolers Wilderness 40 Qt
- Fourth Place:** Esky Coolers 55
- Fifth Place:** Yeti Coolers Tundra 45 **FW**