



**NEWTON
FATE 2**

£120.00 www.newtonrunning.co.uk

When the Newtons strode onto the market, I predicted they'd be a fad. Well, nine years later, I'm eating my words! Versatility's been key to Newton's success with the Fate 2 following its predecessor with relatively shallow lugs. (For newcomers, Newton's USP are lugs across the metatarsals to steer you into a 'natural' forefoot landing position.) There's an argument that they're so shallow, you're better off with a traditional pair of neutral shoes but these transition smoothly, fit well and, like most Newtons, respond efficiently. They're certainly niche, and not just because of that lug - their low-profile construction might not suit heavier runners; that said, they're no über-lightweights (301g), the five lugs clearly adding weight. The upper's purportedly more breathable than the original Fate but that's princess-and-pea stuff.

» VERDICT
 **80%**
Delivers an efficient ride but they certainly won't suit all



**INOV-8
ROAD CLAW 275**

£115.00 www.inov-8.com

Think Inov-8, think muddy fells and a ride that's perfect for off-road terrain; think Inov-8 and the road and, from past experience, you're left disappointed at the rather flat minimalist (in cushioning not breadth) offering. Not with the Road Claw 275 (which is named after its weight, albeit our size UK10.5 came in at 327g). This is an impressive shoe that'll delight not only Inov-8 off-road fans but those of a pavement persuasion. Yes, there's still a slightly flatter ride but, for most, it's enough and that's down to the brand's Powerflow midsole technology that offers up to '10% better shock absorption and 15% better energy return than standard midsoles'. Verifying those claims is impossible but Inov-8 have certainly learnt that winter tarmac miles demand something springier than their previous road efforts.

» VERDICT
 **83%**
Inov-8 is learning quickly what roadies want; an impressive shoe



**NEW BALANCE
880V6**

£100.00 www.newbalance.co.uk

The 880s comprise one of the largest drops on test, descending to a pretty lofty 10mm from heel to toe. That headline-grabbing feature derives from the double-layer of cushioning in the midsole, which not surprisingly forges one springy ride (and the heaviest shoe on test at 356g). The idea is that the top-layer Absorb is denser and more cushioned, while the Acteva Lite layer below is lighter and more durable. The concern is that too much absorption affects the feel of foot on ground; in use, this proves relatively unfounded, though that and the lack of flexibility, despite the redesigned stretchy mesh upper, holds back speedier efforts. But the blown-rubber outsole offers good levels of grip. And we'd read claims that the tongue is too puffy and squeezes the fit - we don't agree.

» VERDICT
 **81%**
Reliable training shoe that'll comfort larger triathletes



**SKECHERS
GORUN FORZA**

£94.00 www.skechers.com

Skechers entered the performance run category with lightweight low-drop efforts. With the Forza, Skechers have joined the world of stability-enhancing pumps and have produced a reasonable effort. It's certainly one of the most diligent workhorses on test, Skechers' Resalyte medial posting seeing to heel-to-toe transition duties; in fact, it could be argued it's too eager as the Forza feels a touch cumbersome at slow speeds. That's down to its 352g weight, which is the second heaviest on test. Strangely, the ride's much more natural and stable when you raise the intensity. Entry and tongue padding's up there with the Hoka, as are the potential width issues with slender feet. Because tight lacing's required, the toebox begins to crease over, which caused discomfort.

» VERDICT
 **76%**
Solid run shoe that's eager to race, but just doesn't inspire