

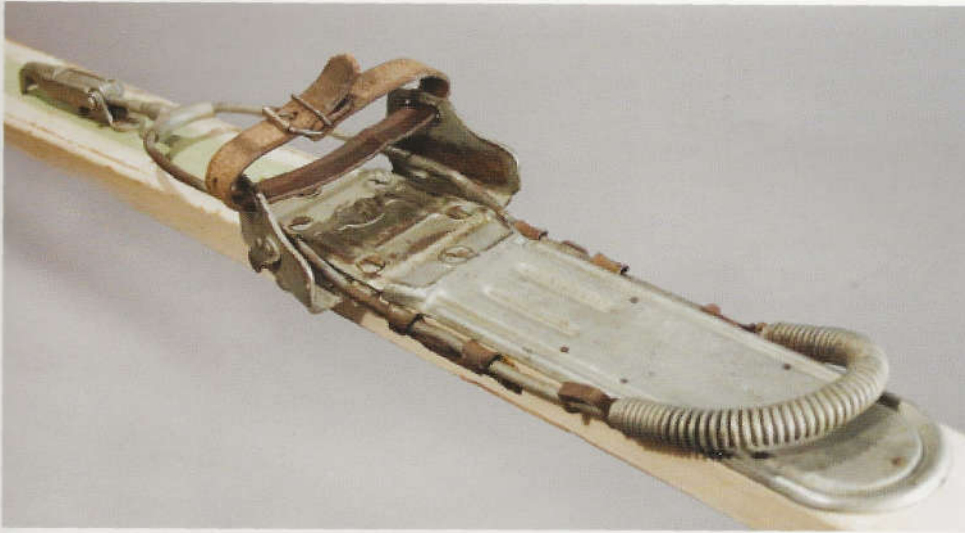
EQUIPMENT

Ski equipment



An integral part of the Mountain Troops' mission was the ability to use skis. There was an issue model of skis, but these were supplemented, especially later in the war, by an increasing number of civilian models donated by the German public in the winter donation drives. (These appeals did not bring in only cold-weather clothing, but anything else that might be of help in the Russian winter, for which the government and the Wehrmacht high command had so notoriously failed to equip the troops in winter 1941/42.) The issue pattern skis were painted white with a broad green stripe down the centre of the top; the base was cut square, unlike the rounded bottom surface of civilian skis. The Wehrmacht used a variety of bindings manufactured by a number of different firms; to confirm their approval these were stamped by the Waffenamts (Ordnance Bureau), as were the wooden skis themselves. The bindings had a metal base on which the boot sat, its raised cheeks having an adjustable gap for different boot widths. A buckled leather strap retained the toe of the boot, and a metal spring at the rear clamped into the groove above its heel. Ski poles were made from a wooden or bamboo shaft with a leather grip binding and wrist strap at the top, and a metal ferrule at the end. Above this an open wooden ring was retained around the shaft by four web or leather straps, allowing this base to angle freely on the surface of the snow.





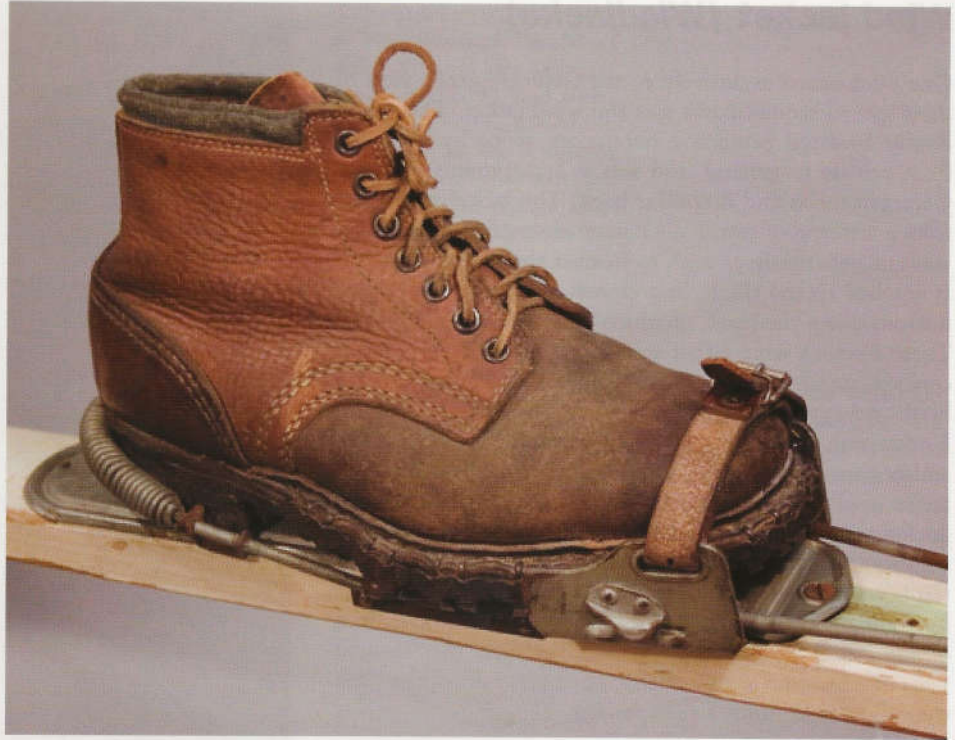
(Left) The bindings are seen here from three-quarter rear; note also the square-cut side and bottom surfaces of the military ski. The clamp at the front was raised to release the spring loop at the rear; the skier then placed his boot on the metal plate and inserted the toe between the cheeks and under the leather strap, and clipped the spring around the grooved boot-heel. He then pressed the front clamp down, to tension the heel binding.

(Right) These skis are marked underneath the tips by the maker, Heinrich Hammer of Ulm, and display the Waffenamt approval stamp. A serial number was also often stamped into the top surface.



(Left) A small canvas bag of accessories was usually supplied along with the skis. These included self-clamping ski tips in case of breakage, a folding multi-tool for making adjustments or repairs, and even spare binding plates and heel springs. Two period containers of ski-wax are also shown here.

(Right) The mountain boot retained in the binding of a military ski, the rear spring gripping tight in the bevel of the heel. Note the metal cheeks of the forward binding seat, which make clear why the front pairs of sole cleats had to have flat outer faces.



(Left) Snowshoes were also issued to Gebirgsjäger when necessary. The oval wooden frame was laced with a pattern of rope retaining a canvas panel, which provided support on the soft surface. A series of crude canvas straps were laced through metal rings to keep the boot firmly in place.