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SHOE-BUYING TIP: Shop at a local specialty running store, not a sporting goods store. The running knowledge and shoe-fitting skills of the staff are priceless.

[1] **Inov-8 Road-X 233**, \$120
 8.2 oz. (men's); 6.7 oz. (women's)

FIT: The updated version of the Road-X 233 has a similar fit to other Inov-8 shoes, with a snug and secure heel and midfoot, and just enough wiggle room in the toe box.

FEEL: Inov-8 has gone to great lengths to create a softer feeling underfoot in some of its shoes, including the Road-X 233. A slightly softer midsole foam and more forgiving outsole rubber have eliminated the "slappy" sensation of some previous models while still maintaining enough semi-firm footing for performance-oriented running.

RIDE: Fast, flexible and light, the ride is footloose and fancy-free. The additional softness was very noticeable and appreciated, and combined with the sleek profile and low-to-the-ground feel, cues up an agile, efficient vibe at any pace.

[2] **Nike Flyknit Lunar 1+**, \$160
 7.6 oz. (men's); 6.3 oz. (women's)

FIT: This shoe's tightly knitted seamless upper serves up a comfortable, locked-down, foot-contouring fit in the midfoot and forefoot, but some testers felt the heel fit a bit loose.

FEEL: Despite the highly advanced manufacturing that goes into this shoe, it has a sublimely simple feeling to it. Its moderately soft, cushioned and flexible undercarriage is also supportive but not inhibiting in any way.

RIDE: This shoe rides as smooth as any in this review. The supple midsole and low-volume fit offer great heel-toe roll-through while also giving the runner good sensory connection with the ground.

[3] **Mizuno Wave Elixir 8**, \$120
 8.8 oz. (men's); 7.4 oz. (women's)

FIT: Snug in the heel, the new seamless upper of the Elixir 8 is very conforming to the foot while still allowing it to move without restriction. A wide toe box provides room where it's needed without feeling too generous.

FEEL: Lightweight, low to the ground and flexible, the Elixir feels like a fast shoe from the second you step into it. But unlike some lithe racers and up-tempo trainers, this model offers moderate support and stability through the arch and is well cushioned in both the heel and forefoot.

Ride: The updated Elixir is firm and fast enough to be a solid option for tempo runs or longer races, but still substantial enough to use as an everyday stability trainer for runners with neutral mechanics or those who are mild overpronators.

