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11 Gear Review

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Stylish clothing that keeps you sunburn-free



By Linda Hayes

Special to Aspen Times Weekly

No one would mistake me for a gearhead. A techie, I'm not. On the rare occasion I'm spotted at a sporting goods shop, it's likely Gorsuch or Performance Ski.

So when talk with a visiting friend (from NYC, no less) turned to a new active clothing line she was representing — AYANA Apparel — that featured certified UV-protection, my first question was: "Is it cute?"

The answer arrived a couple of weeks later in the mail. Two surprisingly fashionable items — a crisp, tailored white shirt with a shapely curved hem and a cropped, navy blue jacket with oversized button loops — had potential. I slipped them on. Both were fitted and slim, a far cry from some of the other UV-protective clothing out there, which hung shapelessly on my 5-foot-2-inch frame.

AYANA's designers, I thought, understand that form and function can coexist peacefully under a single label. That, it turned out, was an understatement.

Tucked inside the garments, hang tags touted that "AYANA is committed to helping women maintain and advance their overarching beauty through high quality, stylish UV-protective clothing that protects their health, promotes an active lifestyle and fosters individual style."

A lofty claim, to be sure. But would it deliver? To find out, I conducted a field test of sorts. Decked out in my new garb, I booked a sunny table at The Tavern and went to lunch.

A little backstory. AYANA was founded by Sonja Gfeller, an active Southern California (by way of Switzerland) clothing

buyer and designer whose résumé includes stints with Bogner, Daniel Hechter and Lacoste. Sold on the importance of protecting the skin from harmful UVA rays, she researched various methods of incorporating UV protection into fabrics, finally hitting on a way to weave in titanium dioxide, a sunblock used in sunscreen. The resultant weave is said to block 97 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

AYANA fabric is a soft microfiber that wicks moisture, allows skin to breathe, and gets even softer with wear. Machine washing won't wash the UV protection away. (The name AYANA was inspired by the amaranth flower, a bloom in Greek

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mythology that never fades.)

The new fall line includes trendy tunics and T-shirts, flirty skirts, pantsuits, fitted shirts and jackets, and hooded coats, all of which are comfortable enough to wear under the sun for some casual recreation or spectator sports. Prices range from \$80 to \$150.

And my field test, er, lunch? AYANA kept me cool, sunburn-free and, most important, in synch with the decidedly stylish, (upwardly) mobile crowd. Find out more at www.ayana.com.