

GROUP TEST WINTER SHELLS



TREK & MOUNTAIN GROUP TEST

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Is it possible to buy one jacket that'll cope with all of your winter activities? We find out...

With winter well on its way, it's time to pack away your lightweight waterproofs and get kitted out in some more heavy duty protection. But if you're like us and participate in a range of activities in winter, from hillwalking to Scottish winter mountaineering to ski touring in the Alps, is it possible to buy one jacket that'll cope with every situation? On the face of it this seems like a tall order, with different demands and requirements placed on the jacket from each activity, however accepting that some compromises might have to be made – and on the basis that you can choose which features are the most important to you – we've rounded up 12 jackets that will have a good stab at providing you with an all-in-one solution to your winter needs.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

FABRIC

Whichever fabric you opt for, be it eVent, Gore-Tex, Nikwax Analogy etc, you'll be expecting a combination of waterproof-ness and breathability. But also be aware of comfort and ease of movement – after all, it's no use being warm and dry but not being able to move fluently.

POCKETS

Placement of pockets is important – ideally they'll be sited away from areas where backpack waist straps and harnesses inhabit, so that means higher up on the chest. Think about whether you need a pocket big enough for a map, and whether you'll find internal pockets useful.

ZIPS AND SEAMS

Zips and seams will be the achilles heel of a jacket if they're not up to

the job. The main zip ideally needs to have a storm flap covering it, at the very least it must be water-resistant. Taped seams are par for the course and external pockets should have stormflaps or water-resistant zips, or both.

HOOD

For mountaineering you'll need a jacket with a helmet-compatible hood. This means not only it's big enough to fit the helmet, but also adjustable by drawcords and to get a good fit. The hood should also allow you to move your head easily.

EXTRA FEATURES

Added features to look out for include under-arm insulation ('pitzips'), snowskirts for ski touring/mountaineering, articulated elbows and shoulders, soft chinguard and so on.

PARAMO ASPIRA

£290

Construction: Nikwax Analogy

Weight: 940g

Women's version available: Yes

The Aspira is a seriously comfortable jacket. It's heavier than other jackets here but offers more in the way of insulation so you're likely to wear less underneath it. The hood is excellent, with the soft fabric moving easily when wearing a helmet. There's four chest pockets all with stormflaps but surely the arm vents would be more effective under the arms? Waterproofness can be compromised in certain situations but this is a jacket ideal for the coldest weather.



Verdict: Superbly comfortable jacket
perfect for cold conditions

9/10
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