

Country Walking guide to...

# Waterproof jackets

Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the... rain, so a good jacket is vital.

## Fit

Waterproofs should be roomy enough to move in freely and, of course, to fit various different insulation and base-layers underneath. But, if they are too big then there's a good chance that your perspiration will condense before it's had chance to escape through the fabric, and this will make you wet from the inside. Hems shouldn't ride up, check them by bending over; and sleeves should cover wrists, even when you reach up.

## Collar, cuffs and hem

The collar should feel snug beneath your chin to stop warm air escaping when it's fully zipped up. Cuffs should be adjustable and/or elasticated so they can be pulled up if needed, and they will always ventilate better if they can be left unfastened. Adjustable drawcords at the hem can be tightened or loosened to keep warmth in or cool you down.

## Hood

A good hood is really important, especially in very bad weather. Check that it covers your head well – really important if you have long hair – and that it is easy to adjust for a really snug fit. The best hoods will cover most of your face when fully battened down. Check that the whole hood moves with you as you turn your head, or your visibility will become seriously impaired (dangerous when crossing roads). A wired or stiffened peak will stay put in a strong wind – not uncommon when hillwalking. Don't forget to look at how the hood is stowed when it's not being used. Rollaway hoods are neat and convenient, but can make the collar feel bulky at the expense of comfort, while detachable ones are easy to lose.

## Fabric

Waterproof jackets are usually made from fabrics that are both waterproof and breathable. The dearer ones in this test feature a Gore-Tex or eVENT waterproof/breathable membrane, trapped between a face-fabric and inner lining, while others use brands' own fabrics and membranes. All work by allowing water vapour to pass through them, but not letting liquid water molecules in. The Páramo is the exception, using a polyester fabric permeated with water-repelling Nikwax, which works in a similar way to the natural oils in animal fur. For total waterproofness, all seams should be taped. When looking at various jackets, it's worth remembering that soft face-fabrics will feel more pleasant and rustle less. Many fabrics are also ripstop for extra durability (see jargon buster below).

## Main zip

This should either be completely waterproof or protected by a storm flap – internal or external (or even both). External storm flaps should also fasten securely with Velcro and/or pop-studs.

## Pockets

These should be placed high enough for easy access with a rucksack on, and, ideally, mesh-lined so they can double as air vents (although these need to be kept fastened in rain or water will get in). A pocket big enough for a map is particularly useful, as is an inside zipped pocket for valuables.

Photo: Tom Critchell

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## Jargon buster

**Breathability:** Process where body moisture (sweat) passes through materials to the outside, helping to keep you dry inside the jacket. There are different tests for measuring the breathability of waterproofs. Most produce results expressed as a moisture vapour transmission rate (MVTR) – a rating in grammes of how much vapour a square metre of fabric will allow to pass through in 24 hours expressed

as (g/m<sup>2</sup>/24). The higher the MVTR the better. Another method (used for Gore-Tex) is RET which measures the Resistance of Evaporation of a Textile. The lower the RET the better.

**Drawcord hem:** Adjustable elastic system in a jacket hem, for insulation and ventilation.

**DWR:** Many jackets have a Durable Water Repellent finish (DWR) applied to the outer fabric, so



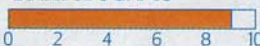
HIGHLY  
COMMENDED  
Country  
Walking

## Páramo Cascada £190



Sizes: XS-XL Fabric: Páramo Nikwax Weight: 725g  
Men's version: Yes Contact: 01892 786444; www.paramo.co.uk

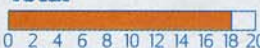
### Comfort & Fit



### Performance



### Total



Fantastic breathability and comfort explain why the Cascada is Páramo's best-selling walking jacket. The fabric is soft and luxurious against the skin, and the fit tends to be quite roomy and long at the hem. Out in the hills, the waterproofing and breathability almost defy the laws of nature, driving away sweat and keeping out water to keep you totally dry. Handwarmer pockets are very low for access when wearing a pack, and there's a huge waterproof chest pocket that will easily take an OS map. It's got an excellent swivel hood with a really stiff peak which rolls away when you don't need it. The elastic/Velcro cuffs are easily adjustable and will pull up to the elbows if you get too warm.

ALTHOUGH EXPENSIVE, PARAMO GARMENTS ARE INCREDIBLY HARD WEARING.

A DOUBLE LAYER OF FABRIC ON THE SHOULDERS MAKES LOAD CARRYING MORE COMFORTABLE.

BEST  
IN TEST  
Country  
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## Helly Hansen W Ekolab £200



Sizes: XS-XL Fabric: Three-layer Helly Tech Waterproof Breathable Protection Weight: 450g Men's version: Yes Contact: 0115 960 8797; www.hellyhansen.com

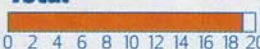
### Comfort & Fit



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A very comfortable and fantastic looking jacket from the environmentally friendly Ekolab collection. All hardware (zips etc) is made from 100% recycled material and the Eco-nylon fabric is coloured with environmentally sensitive dyes. Extra features have been kept to a minimum, but it performs brilliantly. The fabric is very breathable, totally waterproof and soft to the touch. There's a lovely deep hood which swivels with head movement (although the peak is a little floppy), and Velcro adjustable cuffs pull up easily to the elbows. The two large handwarmer pockets are mesh-lined for venting, and there are pit zips for a welcome flow of air. Buy this and you'll be helping the environment, too.

THE EKOLAB COLLECTION IS THE START OF HELLY HANSEN'S LONG TERM ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE.

THE REMOVABLE RAW SNOW SKIRT WILL HELP KEEP YOU WARM AND DRY AND ALSO MAKES IT GREAT FOR SNOW SPORTS.

**Regatta Lotus £40**  
Made from waterproof breathable Isotex-coated polyester fabric, this girl's jacket has taped seams, concealed hood, two zipped lower pockets and a chest pocket. It can be machined-washed (cool 40 degrees). Boy's version: Diffuse. Ages: 3-12+. [www.regatta.com](http://www.regatta.com)



**Peter Storm Eriskay 3 in 1 £38.99**  
Durable, versatile boy's waterproof with inner fleece jacket which can be removed in warmer weather and worn alone. Machine-washable with taped seams, rollaway hood, two zipped hand and chest pockets, inside pocket and reflective trim. Ages: 3-13. [www.millets.co.uk](http://www.millets.co.uk)



**Muddy Puddles Puddlepac £20**  
Fully lined waterproof made from supple nylon that packs into a pocket and is long enough to sit on. Comes in navy, pink floral or sky blue with elasticated hood/cuffs, taped seams and 'yank-proof' zip. Ages: 18mths-8yrs. [www.muddypuddles.com](http://www.muddypuddles.com)



**Bushbaby Ripstop £30**  
Made from a tough ripstop fabric for year-round protection. Generous long cut with taped seams, peaked hood with volume adjuster, fleece-lined pockets and reflective piping/logo. Machine-washable at 40 degrees (non bio) and comes in three colours. Ages: 2-4. [www.bush-baby.com](http://www.bush-baby.com)



[www.cotswoldoutdoor.com](http://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com)

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