

n test

women's warm trousers

Photo: Tony West

Judy Armstrong investigates which insulated trousers stand up to a British winter

water repellency

Most trousers have a durable water repellent coating (DWR). However, this can wear off after multiple washes and will need renewing.

crotch gusset

Unless the trousers are loose fitting, a crotch gusset makes a big difference to comfort. The extra piece of fabric allows more flexibility and movement. Avoid bulky seams that meet in the central crotch area; these are especially uncomfortable on close-fitting trousers.

venting

Warm trousers need leg vents, if they are to be versatile. These are best as zips on the outer thigh. A mesh gusset prevents snow, cold air or moisture hitting bare skin, while allowing air flow. Short vents are less useful. Very long vents (three-quarter length) need poppers to stop the trousers flapping when the zips are undone.

waist

We're all different shapes, and some of us change shape with the seasons! I prefer a flexible fit, with side elastic, a flat zipped front and belt loops. In my experience, low-rise or hipster pants do not work well with rucksack hipbelts. They also fit very snugly, which can be irritating after a few hours on the hill.

ankle cuff

The more stuff hanging around the ankle, the harder trousers are to shorten. Plain hems – no zip, ankle guards or studs – are the easiest to deal with. It is possible to hem cuffs with a zip, but legs that noticeably flare or have very stretchy fabric can be a challenge.

Warm to Winter

Geared up for you



PÁRAMO

Ladies Cascada Trousers
£100



★★★★★

TECHNICAL SPEC

Materials: Nikwax Analogy Waterproof (polyester microfibre), Nikwax TX Direct finish
Waist: wide elastic, static drawcord, belt loops
Inside leg: 25"/63.5cm - 31"/79cm
Ankle: zip, two poppers
Pockets: two zip hand/hip
Weight: 495g
Sizes: 15 waist and leg combinations (14 for men)
Likes: fabric performance, venting, comfort
Dislikes: shapeless

Thanks to Páramo's Nikwax Analogy waterproofing system, these pants completely remove the need for overtrousers. They are extremely warm, very easy to ventilate, highly breathable and waterproof. The inside face slides smoothly over bare skin, without feeling like slimy nylon. The cut is shapeless/roomy, with articulated knees and an elasticated waist, so there's room for leggings in sub-zero temperatures. Venting is via a three-quarter-length zip with internal poppers so they can gape neatly from mid-thigh to ankle. Other touches are a double layer seat and zipped hand pockets. Apart from undisputed fabric performance, the best thing is that Cascada should fit everyone (except maybe women with curvaceous backsides; the trousers seem to bulge equally front and back). There are 15 waist and leg combinations for women so nobody needs to shorten hems! A miracle. They may look blobby but for cold, wet weather these trousers are the dog's whatsits.

Paramo
01892 786444
www.paramo.co.uk



HELLY HANSEN

Women's Verglas Softshell Pants
£100



★★★

TECHNICAL SPEC

Materials: 50% polyester, 35% nylon, 15% elastane
Waist: zip, hook, two studs, Velcro side tabs, belt loops
Inside leg: 32"/81cm, 34"/86.5cm
Ankle: plain, internal gaiter with gripper elastic, boot hook
Pockets: two zip hand/hip, two zip rear
Weight: 725g
Sizes: XS-XL/8-18 (men: S-XXL)
Likes: water repellency
Dislikes: inner thigh vents, low rise, moderate breathability

There is no actual insulation in these trousers; instead, heat is retained by the dense soft shell fabric. They do have a brushed lining, and were warm and highly water resistant in cold, damp weather. But the lining felt prickly after strenuous effort because even with the leg vents open, the fabric couldn't transfer moisture fast enough. These vents – zipped with a mesh gusset – are on the inner thigh, so rub together unless I walk like John Wayne. The fit is fairly close, especially at the crotch, with a low rise. This doesn't work well with a rucksack hipbelt. Inside leg lengths are long; the hem is simple to shorten but does have an internal gaiter. The gaiters have a useful boot hook, but retain heat/sweat in the lower leg. In essence, these pants would work best for slim, leggy women who don't sweat much. So, not me, then!

Helly Hansen
0115 960 8797
www.hellyhansen.com



ARC'TERYX

Firebee AR Pant
£225



★★★★★

TECHNICAL SPEC

Materials: Windstopper (62% nylon, 37% polyester, 2% Spandex), DWR finish
Waist: zip, press stud, integral webbing belt, detachable braces
Inside leg: 30"/76cm* (size M)
Ankle: Keoprotec guard, internal gaiters/static drawcord/grip strip
Pockets: two thigh cargo, one zip hip
Weight: 435g
Sizes: XS-XL (men's Fury AR Pant: S-XL)
Likes: fabric, cut, crotch, pockets
Dislikes: difficult to shorten, minimal warmth

Firebee AR soft shell pants are sublime. Fabric performance is excellent: windproof, highly water resistant with a warm brushed lining, and very breathable. Long thigh vents have water-resistant zips and open completely, with no mesh gusset. This has an instant cooling effect, but can also let in wind-driven rain or snow. Fabric aside, the real joy is the cut. I have a classic British figure and these slip on to allow room in all the right places without excess fabric or bulk. The diamond-gusset crotch and shaped seat are especially comfortable. Keoprotec patches on the inner ankles guard against crampons or boot scuffing but make it almost impossible to shorten the leg. Short (10cm) internal gaiters sport gripper elastic and a static drawcord to pull snug around boots. Bellowed cargo pockets on the thigh are actually big enough to be useful! Glorious. Expensive. Only you can decide if they're worth it.

Arc'Teryx (Big Stone)
0114 258 6688
www.arcteryx.com



NIKE ACG

Cairn Insulated Pant
£45



★★★

TECHNICAL SPEC

Materials: polyester taffeta; 40g Thermore insulation; brushed tricot lining
Waist: zip, press stud, belt loops
Inside leg: 32"/81cm* (size 12)
Ankle: plain
Pockets: two zip hip/hand, two zip thigh, two rear
Weight: 495g
Sizes: 8-16 (men: S-XL)
Likes: insulation, fabric combination, plain hem
Dislikes: hipster styling, minimal water resistance

These trousers tick plenty of boxes. They are warm, thanks to low-bulk, soft, breathable Thermore insulation. The outer fabric is durable but has no water repellency, although the insulation layer stops some moisture seeping through. The brushed polyester lining feels lovely against bare skin; it got a little clammy when I was working hard or the temperature rose (there are no thigh vents) but for cold weather the fabric combo worked well. Articulated knees allow good movement and the unadorned hem can be easily shortened. For me, though, the trousers are let down by the cut. A low rise makes them close-fitting at the crotch, with a waistband that sags at the back to the level of a rucksack hipbelt's baseline. I don't find this comfortable; hipster styling is more appropriate to the pub than the fells. If you like that styling, these warm pants are a reasonable choice for winter.

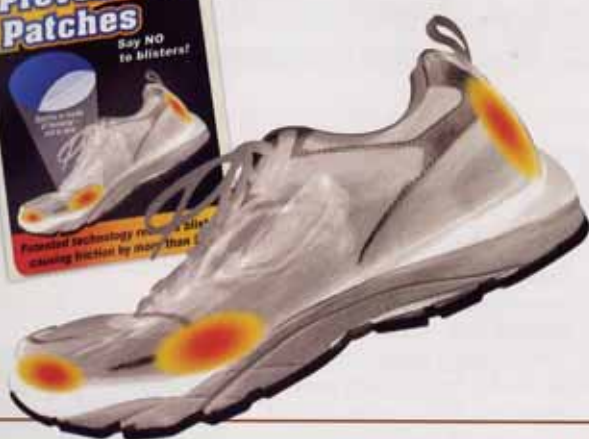
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Blister Prevention Patches

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Blistering into the UK

A NEW variety of blister protection patches have recently been introduced to the UK.

ENGO patches are being imported from the USA by LOC Manufacturing, the manufacturing arm of independent orthotic clinic the London Orthotic Consultancy. LOC's clinicians came across ENGO while treating a number of their sports injury clients who complained of always getting blisters. Having found them an effective preventative, they signed up to distribute ENGO patches in this country.

The patches are applied to shoes and boots, rather than feet – unlike most other blister products – and are designed to dramatically reduce the friction between footwear and your skin in order to prevent blisters breaking out. They should last up to six weeks or 300 miles.

ENGO: www.goengo.co.uk

Helly launches environmental sustainability project

HELLY Hansen has launched a research and development project called Ekolab, with the aim of trying out new, sustainable design and manufacturing processes.

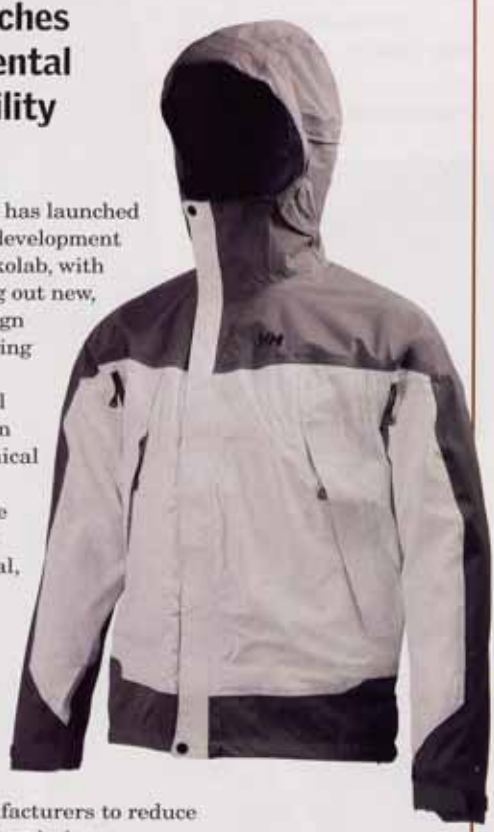
The inaugural Ekolab collection includes a technical jacket and trousers, a fleece made with 60% recycled material, and organic cotton T-shirts. The collection is designed to be simple and functional and the company has worked

with local manufacturers to reduce logistics-related emissions.

The men's and women's Ekolab Jacket (pictured) and Pant are constructed with waterproof breathable Helly Tech econylon fabrics, and coloured with environmentally sensitive dyes. The designers have incorporated performance features, such as pit zips, without adding any unnecessary metal and plastic parts. Helly is also eliminating harmful PTFE from the waterproof breathable membranes in all of its products and introducing fluorocarbon-free DWR coatings.

Helly Hansen is not the first outdoor brand to experiment with environmentally aware practices – Páramo and Patagonia have long advocated sustainable and ethical manufacture, and Berghaus launched an "eco friendly" range earlier this year. A recent report from the Outdoor Industries Association (see p10) found that three quarters of people would like to see outdoor companies offer a greater number of environmentally friendly products and that 51% claim they are willing to pay more for them.

Helly Hansen: 0115 960 8797, www.hellyhansen.com



Lightweight move from Páramo

PÁRAMO have brought out a lightweight version of one of their most popular garments, the Velez Adventure Smock.

The limited edition Velez Adventure Light Smock is currently only available from the Páramo store in Covent Garden (in store or by mail order) but will be made more widely available in the spring. It is the first Páramo garment to be launched in lightweight Nikwax Analogy, which has the weather proofing and moisture control properties of standard Analogy fabric but with a weight reduction of almost 19%.

The Velez Adventure Smock was introduced to the Páramo range in 2007. It has a fixed hood with a wired peak and a large front pocket. Side zips provide excellent ventilation and the garment can be reproofed. At a RRP of £180, this new version, the Velez Adventure Light Smock, is the lightest Páramo waterproof available. Expect to see a test report in TGO in the New Year.

The Páramo London store is at 29 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8NA. Tel: 0207 379 8615.

www.paramo.co.uk



Men's Velez Adventure Light

XS (S) Free & Thundershead with Black lining



Tiny titanium set from Primus

Look out for Primus's new, super-lightweight TiLite stove set. The gas stove and 0.9-litre pot together weigh just 198g, but the pot is large enough for two people and will carry a 230g gas cartridge and the stove when packed. It comes with piezo ignition to make lighting easier.

With a 4000 Watt output, the stove should boil a litre of water in three minutes. It retails at £90.

Primus: www.primus.se

Rosker (distributors): 023 9252 8711, www.rosker.co.uk



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