



The immortal words of American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow – ‘into each life some rain must fall’ – are unlikely to be fully appreciated if you get a drenching while out walking the dog, navigating the South Downs Way or on a climbing challenge in Ireland (like our intrepid Which? staff). A good waterproof jacket, on the other hand, is all that you really need to keep your clothes dry and your spirits high in the great outdoors.

What we did

Which? Holiday tested 16 of the bestselling general purpose men’s waterproof jackets from the biggest brands in the UK.

All the jackets went to our lab where we tested for breathability and durability. We conducted waterproof tests too. The jackets were also tested by Which? staff while on a charity Three Peaks Challenge in Ireland in July. And it rained – a lot!

What we found

Interestingly, all three of the jackets awarded Best Buy status (see page opposite) are also lightweight jackets – the heaviest of the three weighs in at 450g for a men’s large (just more than a large tin of beans). They will set you back

between £70 and £85, but in return you could expect excellent rain and wind protection and a jacket made from strong, abrasion-resistant fabric. Most of the jackets we tested were of a high standard and would be suitable protection for wet and windy days out.

Those towards the bottom of the table scoring less well (see pg 24) are either likely to be less breathable and cause condensation to build up on the inside, or to leak from the outside in – either way making you damp.

Most of the jackets we tested for this report are also available in a women’s fit, with the same fabric and waterproof qualities.

When buying a jacket, it makes sense to shop around for the best deal. High street and online retailers offer the range we tested.

Other jackets to consider

The Lightening, made from Sprayway’s HydroDry coated fabric and combined with a mesh lining, costs £72. It’s a versatile jacket that passed our waterproof and breathability tests, but scores lower for tear strength.

The solid Sprayway Cyclone (£115), made of Gore-Tex Performance Shell fabric, also has the same comfortable features, such as the warming

fleece around the collar, a dropped tail at the back for extra protection and large pockets, but also benefits from a double flap over the zip. Our tester said: ‘I wore this jacket in hours of persistent rain and was impressed with how waterproof it was.’

Two jackets from Berghaus, the Cornice and RG1, also perform strongly. The RG1 is a smart-looking jacket made from Aquafoil coated fabric and is a reasonable price at £70. With a good length, it performs best on overall durability and in our waterproof tests. The hood packs away nicely into the collar when not needed and the wide cuffs securely tighten with simple velcro strips to keep out the rain. In the field, our tester noted that the jacket did not have a peak on the hood, so there was no protection from the high winds and showers.

The Cornice (£120) has a longer body length which some people will love. Made from Gore-Tex Performance Shell fabric, it performs well for breathability and in our waterproof tests, and the outer fabric is very robust. The roll-away hood has a good peak on it to keep out the rain, but there are some flaps that blow about when it is very windy. In the lab it scored lower on the abrasion test than the other jackets we tested.



• £70

Best Buys**Marmot PreCip 82%**

The best jacket in our test was the Marmot PreCip, costing £70 – a great value option. This is a lightweight, simple shell jacket that would be a good choice for fair-weather walkers. Highly waterproof and breathable (made from Marmot's durable PreCip coated polyurethane fabric), the jacket also has zips in the armpits for extra ventilation. The hood has a good peak on it for rain protection and can be tucked away when not needed. The jacket comes in good colours and, as a bonus, will pack up very small to fit into a rucksack.

Cheapest retailer Amazon

which?
BEST BUY

• £85

Montane Atomic DT 80%

The Montane Atomic DT is the lightest of all the jackets in our test, weighing 312g for a men's large. It uses a similar polyurethane coating fabric to the Marmot PreCip and would be a good jacket for all but the coldest days. It even comes with its own stuff-sack. The jacket is cut quite short, finishing at the top of the waist, but is long in the arms and drops down lower at the back. Reflective strips at the front and rear aid visibility – something our tester thought to be a good feature when caught in fog on Mount Brandon on our Irish Three Peaks Challenge.

Cheapest retailer Rathbones of Keswick

which?
BEST BUY

• £70

The North Face Resolve 80%

The North Face Resolve is the third of our Best Buy garments to use a polyurethane coating fabric, this time the North Face's own breathable HyVent coating. This solid, quality jacket lacks some of the features that an experienced walker may require, such as an adjustable hood that moves with your head and an internal pocket or two, but is a good all-round waterproof and certainly proved its worth in our lab's rain room. Our tester liked the soft, fleece-lined collar and the comfortable mesh lining.

Cheapest retailer Cotswold Outdoor

which?
BEST BUY**Choosing the right jacket for you**

Pockets need to be in the right places for easy access. If you wear a backpack on your walks, take it with you to the shop to try on with the jacket. Bring gloves too, as ideally you'll want to be able to adjust any pull cords and open any zippers without taking your gloves off. Make sure that the cuffs adjust to your wrists snugly.

Flaps over the zips will help to keep the rain out. Some jackets, such as the RAB Drillium and Tog24 Dolomite (right), have water-resistant zips but without storm flaps these can let in rain if not fully closed. If your jacket has zips under the arms, make sure they are easy to open and close.



Check the hood fits properly – look for one with a peak (that won't bend in the wind), protects your cheeks, and doesn't restrict your vision. Tighteners should be easy to use too. Fixed hoods may be preferred to detachable ones as the water won't leak down your neck. Where the hood is detachable, like the Sprayway Lightening or Craghoppers Kiwi, ensure the collar comes up high so there is good overlap.

Circulating air inside the jacket is important for keeping you cool and dry. Where possible, open the pockets and any velcro straps on the cuffs to increase air flow. Chest pockets made of mesh may also allow for air to circulate. For waterproofs to work well, the clothes you wear under your jacket can be as important as the jacket on top. Cotton retains the liquid water from sweat and cannot escape through the fabric – choose a synthetic or wool base layer instead.

Looking after your waterproof jacket

For a jacket to be classed as waterproof, all seams must be sealed. There are different types of fabric designed to keep you dry:

■ **Coating** Fabrics are sprayed with a waterproof coating before being made into garments.

■ **Membrane** A breathable membrane is glued to the outer fabric. The membrane allows water vapour inside the jacket to escape without letting in precipitation and the seams are sealed to prevent leakage. Gore-Tex is the most well-known type of membrane.

■ **Directional fabrics** Although not waterproof from an industry standard perspective, Páramo's unique fabric works like the fur of an animal by transferring both water vapour and liquid water from sweat or rain to the outside of the jacket.

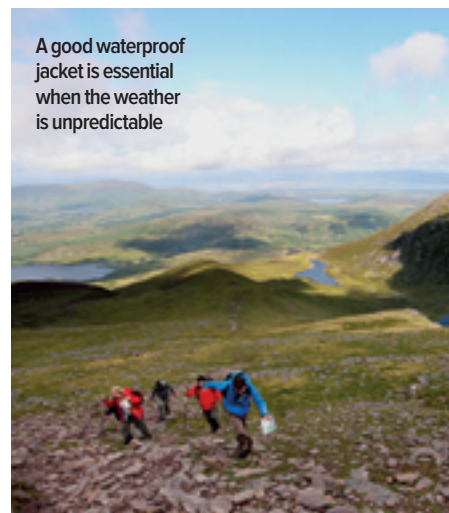
A good jacket should last you many a downpour and be guaranteed waterproof for at least a year after purchase. There are a few things that you can do to improve its durability:

■ Try to either fold or hang your jacket, don't scrunch it as this can stress the fabric.

■ Keep your jacket clean. Dirt gets in the way of the waterproof properties of the fabric.

■ On a coated or membrane jacket, you may find that, after time, the outer fabric may lose its water repellency, causing you to feel damp. Washing the jacket with liquid soap (rather than powder or flakes) to remove dirt residue on the surface, followed by tumble drying and/or ironing on a cool setting may help – test the jacket to see if water beads up on the surface. If it doesn't, try wash-in, re-proofing agents such as Granger's or Nikwax. Buy from outdoor specialist shops.

A good waterproof jacket is essential when the weather is unpredictable



The results of our lab tests

Jacket	SPECIFICATION					PERFORMANCE				SCORE
	RRP (£)	Price we paid (£)	Light-weight	Detachable hood	Pockets	Breathability	Rain room	Waterproof tests	Overall durability	%
Marmot PreCip	70	70	✓		2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	82
Montane Atomic DT	100	85	✓		2	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	80
The North Face Resolve	70	70	✓		2	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	80
Sprayway Lightening	80	72		✓	4	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	79
Sprayway Cyclone	130	115			4	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	78
Berghaus Cornice	160	120			3	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	76
Berghaus RG1	70	70			2	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	75
Páramo Velez	180	162			2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	74
Tog24 Dolomite	159	159			3	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	70
RAB Drillium	160	135	✓		3	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	66
The North Face Upland	100	100			3	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	64
Craghoppers Kiwi	85	60		✓	5	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	63
MountainLife Glacier Extreme	75	46			6	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	63
Lowe Alpine Brueil	140	130			6	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	61
Peter Storm Journey	40	40			5	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	53
Regatta Toro	55	35	✓		4	★	★★★	★★★	★★★	41

Using the table

The more stars the better.

Specification

Lightweight Jackets that are more suited to fair-weather walking.

Detachable hood Jackets with hoods that can come off.

Pockets The total number of pockets (internal and external).

Performance

Breathability We measured how much water vapour could pass through the fabric. A higher rating means less build-up of condensation inside the jacket.

Rain room To test how well the garments have been designed, we put the jackets on a mannequin then left it in a room for two hours

with drizzle and downpours. A high rating means the mannequin stayed dry.

Waterproof tests Water should bead and run off the fabric. A high rating means that this effect is working. We also measured the pressure of water needed to make the fabric leak.

Overall durability We tried to rip

and punch holes in the fabric to test its strength. The higher the rating, the tougher the fabric.

Score

This ignores price and is based on:
Waterproof tests (including repellency and rain room) = 50%
Breathability = 30%
Durability = 20%