

GROUPTEST

CYCLING JOURNALIST **MAT BRETT** REVIEWS WATERPROOF JACKETS

Waterproof jackets

Riding in autumn and winter rain isn't so bad if you're dressed for it. **Mat Brett** explains what to look for in jackets and reviews four

FOR A MANUFACTURER to describe their jacket as 'waterproof', it must meet specified standards. A square metre of the fabric has to be capable of supporting a 5,000mm column of water for 24 hours without it leaking through. The idea is, if it can handle that pressure it'll be able to

keep out rain in the real world.

Many jacket manufacturers list the waterproof rating of their fabrics on the marketing literature. The Pearl Izumi Select Barrier WXB included here, for example, comes with a 10,000mm waterproof rating, and some high-end fabrics have a value of

over 20,000mm.

Even if the fabric is waterproof, a jacket can only be sold as 'water resistant' unless the seams are internally sealed. Taping the seams stops water seeping through the needle holes created in production and between the separate panels.

1 Lining

A mesh liner helps shift sweat and feels more comfortable if you're wearing your jacket over bare arms. It also adds bulk, though, so the jacket is more awkward to carry. Three of the jackets here are 2.5 layer, which means they have a shell fabric with a barrier fabric inside with a raised pattern on the inner face. This raised pattern protects the barrier, helps to disperse moisture, and helps the jacket glide over other clothing, while keeping bulk to a minimum.

2 Breathability

Waterproof-breathable fabrics stop liquid water getting in while micro-pores in the structure allow water vapour to escape as you sweat. This breathability is measured by the rate at which water vapour can pass through in grams per square metre of fabric per 24 hours – often just shortened to g. A mid-range fabric might have a breathability of 5,000g. Again, manufacturers will often list this on their marketing literature.

3 Front zip

A standard zip will let water seep through slowly so check for a storm flap in front or behind it. Most 'waterproof' zips aren't completely waterproof but they will keep leakage to a minimum. A chin guard at the top will prevent any scratching on your neck.

4 Pockets

Pockets are handy but they can also let water in. Check that they have a waterproof zip or a flap over the top to avoid leakage.

7 Rear

An extended back is essential for keeping you covered up when you're stretched forward on the bike. Sometimes you get a flap that can be folded up inside when it's not needed, making the jacket look less cycle-specific if you wear it off the bike.

6 Vents

No matter how breathable a fabric is, extra means of ventilation is important or you'll get damp from a build up of sweat when you get warm. Most jackets have a full-length front zip but it's handy to have adjustment at the neck, cuffs and hem for more venting options. Pit zips are great for reducing humidity without causing flapping, and some mesh-lined pockets can be left open to do a similar job.

5 Sleeves

Long sleeves are a must for keeping your wrists covered when you reach forward. Adjustable cuffs allow you to let in air for cooling or shut it out when you need more warmth.





**WEAR,
TEAR &
WASHING**

When you buy a new jacket, check the taping over by eye. Any rucks, ripples or bubbles could lift – maybe not immediately, but after some wear and a few trips through the washing machine. On that note: do read the label. Most jackets are machine washable on either a 40 or 30 degree cycle. Avoid using fabric softener as you may find that the pores of your once breathable jacket become blocked. The water repellent surface coating on jackets can be refreshed using, e.g. Nikwax TX Direct



ENDURA LUMINITE £84.99

The 2.5L Luminite features loads of reflective flashes and trim to get you seen from all angles at night, and the dropped tail comes with a Luminite LED fibre optic unit – a flashing red strip that really shines out in the dark. It does a good job and has a runtime of over 50 hours.

The nylon fabric with its polyurethane coating stops water impressively (it has a waterproof rating of 10,000mm) and the seam sealing is exceptionally well done throughout. Just as important, it's easy to fine-tune the internal climate thanks to one-hand adjustable drawcords around the neck and hem, lengthy pit zips, and Velcro tabs on the cuffs.

The zips are good YKK ones while the fleece collar lining and chin guard add extra comfort. The sizing on our review jacket was large, especially around the body, so check out the size guide on Endura's website if you can't try before you buy. The Luminite is available in both men's and women's models.

Very visible, highly waterproof, and fully featured – even has illumination.
endura.co.uk



POLARIS PROTON £79.99

This straightforward 2.5-layer jacket is built to a high standard from Polaris's own Hydrovent fabric, which is a lightweight and waterproof nylon. The taping on our review model was excellent and the front zip is water resistant too, with a storm flap behind it, so you really are well protected in this. No rain leaked through at all during testing.

The cut is fairly slim, which avoids any flapping on fast descents, while the rear and arms are long, keeping you well covered when you're stretched out on the bike. The high neck comes with a drawcord so you can seal yourself in, and you get equally effective adjustment around the hem and the cuffs. There are no vents for extra air conditioning on the climbs though, so you have to rely on the front zip to stop things getting clammy.

Reflective dots and logos provide good visibility at night, while the rear pocket is large enough to carry all of your ride essentials.

Completely rainproof and well cut. Lacks vents.
polaris.in



PEARL IZUMI SELECT BARRIER WXB £139.99

The main advantage this jacket has over cheaper options is that it's stretchy. That means you can get a close, flap-free fit without it feeling tight or restricting your movement. It's very comfortable. The Select Barrier WXB is made from a polyurethane/polyester mix that keeps rain out well (the fabric boasts a 10,000mm waterproof rating) and the sealed seams are still looking good after several washes. The front zip is water resistant too, and you get a foldaway flap around the back to stop road spray getting in.

Pearl Izumi call the fit 'semi-form', meaning that you can get a couple of thermal layers underneath during colder weather. It's not the most breathable fabric ever and there's not as much adjustment here as you'll find on many other jackets, although a drawcord at the hem allows you to prevent draughts there. You do get reflective trim, a generous amount of pocket space and even a detachable hood.

Stretch fabric gives snug, comfortable fit for a waterproof.
madison.co.uk



ALTURA NIGHT VISION £69.99

The Night Vision will get you noticed by other road users thanks to masses of reflective trim all round. There's also a Velcro Lightstick LED mount on the back; slap Altura's fibre optic stick on there for extra visibility in traffic. The yellow and orange colour options are super-bright in low level daylight too, although a black version is available if you prefer.

The polyester fabric keeps out rain and spray superbly and it's reasonably breathable too. The pit zips are valuable for stopping you overheating and allowing damp air to escape. The mesh liner helps disperse water vapour too and improves the feel if you wear this jacket over a short-sleeved jersey. The cut is fairly relaxed as bike jackets go, so you'll have no trouble fitting everyday clothes underneath for a short ride into work. That liner means the Night Vision is bulkier than some, but a more packable Night Vision Flite (£79.99) is available. Comes in both men's and women's designs.

Good value, highly visible, and reasonably breathable.
zyro.co.uk