

Grouptest

Lightweight waterproofs

Proof against the rain yet they'll fit in a pocket.

Richard Hallett tests lightweight jackets



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Richard lives in West Wales, so he knows a thing or two about rain

The lightweight waterproof cycling jacket – one that has no inner lining and is, in effect, a single-layer shell – is a key component of any all-weather cyclist's wardrobe. Designed primarily for wet weather, such a jacket also works as a windproof in dry but chilly conditions.

Its effectiveness is dependent on the performance of the fabric used. Pioneered by Gore-Tex some 50 years ago, breathable fabrics employ a membrane impermeable to liquid water droplets but which allows water vapour to pass through. You may become damp anyway by perspiring at a rate in excess of the fabric's maximum rate of water vapour transpiration. If you sweat profusely, look for a fabric with a high breathability rating – 15,000 or higher.

A word on sizing: we requested jackets to fit specified chest and waist measurements and received three Large jackets and one Extra Large; the last was the only one that fitted comfortably in all riding positions. It's a good idea to try before you buy if you can.

Details

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Fit
The jacket should feel comfortable in the most stretched position you'll adopt when pedalling (e.g. on the drops). There should be no tightness across the shoulders and no constriction of the chest or midriff. Sleeves should not be pulled back from the wrists.

2 Moisture control
A breathable fabric is rated in terms of the height of the water column (e.g. 12,000mm) that it will support without penetration, and also the amount of water vapour in grammes per square metre per 24 hours that will pass through. More is better.

3 Cuffs, collar, & hem
Cuffs may be elasticated to grip the wrists. The collar should be high, with a full-height zip, to prevent water from running down the neck. The hem should be elasticated or have a drawstring to prevent it 'riding up'.

4 Visibility
Bright colours make you more visible in poor daylight, while reflective material stands out in headlights at night.

5 Pockets
Not vital on a garment designed to be taken on and off depending on the weather, but a small one may be useful for keys, phone, etc.



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1



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3



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Verdict

Though the Endura is larger than the Altura or Madison jackets, all three size L garments proved to have a cramped fit.

In any case, all four have the required breathable fabric, and there's an impressive spread of competencies, from the Madison's 'racing snake' tailoring to the Endura's sturdy durability.

Beyond size, tailoring and breathability, the main difference between them feels like fabric thickness, which inevitably translates to overall garment weight, if not necessarily degree of waterproofing – in which Madison's lightweight offering is the winner.



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1 Endura Hummvee Lite Jacket

£89.99 endurasport.com

COMPREHENSIVELY EQUIPPED

WITH right-hand zipped breast pocket, part-elasticated cuffs and hem, and a storm-flap inside the front zip, the Hummvee Lite uses a substantial but, rated at 10k/10k, only moderately breathable fabric. It is the heaviest jacket on test at 260g, including packing pouch. The fabric is non-stretch and the cut suited to a more upright riding position, e.g. commuting. Features include reflectives on the tail and sleeves and rubbery grippers on the shoulders, presumably for rucksack straps. Navy, Red, Yellow. Sizes: men's S-XXL; women's S-XL.

▼ **A smart, sturdy, full-featured jacket. Snug across the shoulders.**

2 Altura Pocket Rocket 2

£74.99 altura.co.uk

SUPPLIED IN AN UNMISSABLE day-glo yellow, Altura's Pocket Rocket has an integral tail pocket for packing, elasticated hem and cuffs (which don't quite snug down onto the wrists), and a water-resistant zip with storm flap. The non-stretch fabric performs well – at a rated 15k/15k – but the 200g size L jacket was a very tight fit for me even when sitting upright, and tighter yet on the drops. It would surely be more accurately labeled size M. Perhaps lightweight cycling jackets have shrunk in recent years? Colours: Yellow, Black, Blue, Red. Sizes: men's XS-XXL.

▼ **You won't be missed in this bright jacket, which performs well.**

3 Rapha Core Rain Jacket II

£100 rapha.cc/gb

AT 140G, THE lightest jacket on test and, in size XL, nominally and in fact the largest, Rapha's Core Rain was also the only one to fit me comfortably in all postures. No rating is given for the fabric's breathability. It is light, thin and slightly stretchy. The thoughtful detailing includes snug stretch-fabric cuffs, a drawstring-cinched hem, underarm ventilation holes, and Rapha's trademark offset front zip, water-resistant in this case, plus the firm's customary white band on the left sleeve. Grey, Black, Yellow, Navy, Light Blue, Orange. Sizes: men's XS-XXL; Women's Core Rain Jacket, XXS-XL.

▼ **Brilliantly lightweight with a performance cut and fine details.**

4 Madison Roadrace Premio Men's Waterproof Jacket

£119.99 madison.cc

'PRO-RIDER DEVELOPED', the Roadrace Premio appears to be cut to suit athletes. The P4DRY four-way stretch fabric allows some fitting leeway and keeps drag-inducing flapping to a minimum, making this a jacket suited to the leaner, faster road rider. The fabric offers impressive performance with a 20k waterproof/30k breathability rating, with further air circulation provided by laser-cut holes in the underarm area. There are subtle reflective patches. Black, Red, Blue. Sizes: men's XS-XXL.

▼ **A high-performance top, it's tight-fitting and race-orientated.**