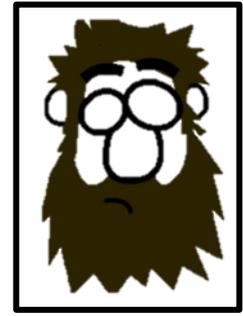


Uncle Wacko's Gear Corner



TRAMPING GEAR ADVICE FROM THE EXPERT

The 3 biggest mistakes (mug) trampers make when buying a rain jacket

1. IT'S NOT ACTUALLY (FULLY) WATERPROOF

Driving rain will always get through a suspect jacket's defences. You only need one small weakness, and she's all over, rover – you'll be soaked.

The problem is not all jackets touted as waterproof actually are. Here are the main problem areas.

ZIPS have to be laminated to be waterproof, but the coating wears off over time. So not having storm flaps is pretty daft – it's just a matter of time before your jacket leaks.

But manufacturers often omit storm flaps to save weight. Some will even freely acknowledge the zips aren't waterproof on their "fully waterproof" (but no storm flaps) jackets (Macpac!). Well what bloody use is that then!

Uncle Wacko reckons you'd be mad to fork out for a rain jacket without storm flaps over all zips - front and pockets. Besides, storm flaps give more venting options – a rather major consideration for any energetic (sweaty) trampers.

SEAMS join sections of fabric together, so have zillions of tiny needle holes that water will surge through if not sealed. So you'd kinda want all seams sealed, right?



No storm flaps – it's only a matter of time before this zip leaks

Test for waterproofness at home, first!

Hose your jacket down vigorously or string it up and fill it with water.

Make sure nothin' gets through. Take a real close look at hood, sleeve seams and zips.

BUT ... some jackets are only seam-sealed at hood and shoulders, which manufacturers charmingly call "critical seam sealing". It's critical all right - you'll end up soaked!

Check inside the jacket - you'll see if it's tape sealed. The tape is glued or heat-bonded over the seam so won't peel off, and is a very effective seal.

But seams can also be welded and that's not so easy to see. You'll need to check the manufacturer's description.

HOOD A loose-fitting hood will let water in, or worse a decent blow will whip it off your face and water will cascade down your torso. Nice!

You need a rear volume adjustment plus side cord adjusters to get a snug, secure fit around your noggin. Test the fit before buying.

And test that the hood really is waterproof! Uncle Wacko's missus once bought a reputable brand jacket whose hood seams leaked like a sieve. You'd want to know about that before you're out in the hills in a storm.

2. IT'S TOO WARM

Trampers overheat in rain jackets, many of us big time. So you don't want a jacket with a liner – unless you're going into very cold temperatures. Use more layers if you need more warmth.

And you need effective venting options. That means pit zips, a full front zip and zipped pockets, all with storm flaps.

Now the best venting jacket Uncle Wacko's ever had is a Paramo (English brand) with upper arm zips instead of pit (under arm) zips. They're amazingly effective and way better than standard pit zips.

It's a mystery why other manufacturers haven't followed suit. Maybe they'll catch on one day ...



Paramo's sleeve zips – brilliant!

3. CRAPPY HOOD

Your hood has to stay tight and snug in a howling gale. So effective rear and facial adjusters are a must.

But watch those facial cords – make sure you can get 'em out of the way. Having them whip about in a blow and slice up your face ain't much fun.

You'll also want a peak to keep water out of your eyes – apparently it's helpful being able to see where you're going when tramping.

Having a decent hood is crucial for your tramping comfort. Check the fit works for you in the shop before parting with your dosh.

We could add a 4th mistake - **crappy construction**

Uncle Wacko was on an ATC tramp once where a bit of a blow on the tops ripped the sleeve seam apart on some lightweight invention one of the party was wearing.

Best to stick with tried and trusted brands, eh.

That'll do you for now. Spot ya.

Uncle Wacko