



Grouptest

Details WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1 Rain protection

The figure in thousands of millimetres isn't an amount of rainfall but the hydrostatic head – the water pressure it will withstand. The bigger the number, the more waterproof the fabric. At 5,000mm, the fabric should withstand persistent light rain. From 10,000mm and above, it should cope with heavy rain.

2 Breathability

Breathability is rated on the same kind of number scale (5,000, 10,000 and so on) as waterproofness. Here it refers to the grammes of water vapour that can pass through the fabric in 24 hours. A bigger number is better for breathability. Vents make a big difference, too.

3 Visibility

Bright colours help in daylight but in the dark you need plenty of reflectivity to

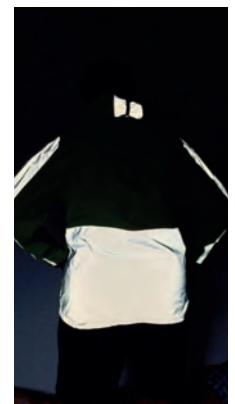
make you stand out in a car's headlights. It is possible these days to get a jacket that's not hi-viz yellow yet still reflective, if you want something more sober.

4 Fit

Fit is crucial but can't really be determined without you trying a garment on. Your reviewer is a slightly chunky, 5ft 6in middle-aged woman who usually fits a 16, so that is what size the test jackets came in. There are men's versions of all four jackets.

5 Features

A hood helps keep rain out but it needs to fit either over or under a helmet, if worn, and ideally be adjustable so that peripheral vision is not lost. Pockets are always handy if they are in the right place. I've used the modern standard for pocket size: will my phone fit in?



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Hannah is a bikepacker who wrote the Pennine Bridleway guidebook but she's also a utility cyclist

Commuting, whatever the season, is always best in dry weather. But as that's not always possible, here are four jackets designed to make a wet commute more pleasant while also keeping you visible to traffic. These aren't super-lightweight racing 'capes' but something a little more substantial for daily wear and slower speeds. They'd also be suitable for touring.

All of the tested jackets are waterproof and breathable to an extent. Ideally rain can't get in while sweat can get out. However, with all jackets it's possible to sweat faster than a fabric can cope with, especially on warmer days, when you're pedalling hard or if you just happen to sweat a lot.

Caring for these jackets is straightforward; they're all machine washable at 30 degrees. Apart from keeping them fresh, washing will help them breathe better as dirt and grime can block pores in the fabric. Don't use fabric conditioner, however, as it messes with a jacket's proofing and breathability.

Most jackets have a durable water-repellent (DWR) coating to help rain run off. This gradually wears away but you can reproof a jacket by washing it with Nikwax TX Direct Wash-In Waterproofor or similar.



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