

## **Camping and Hiking – Cold Weather Clothing**

When packing for Cold Weather Camping, remember that it will be cold or hot, dry or wet. You want to dress in layers so that you can adjust your clothes to maintain your comfort. You want to stay dry – that includes protection from the rain and elements from the outside as well as not overheating and sweating your clothes from the inside. You want to sleep in something light and dry and clean – this means something different than your hiking clothes.

### **Types of Materials:**

**Wool – Merino Wool**- good natural fiber – warmth, breathability and still functions well when wet. Items that I showed include socks, long underwear, hats, gloves and outerwear. Wool felt hat beads water, Socks are good for hiking in winter and summer, long underwear for cold – thin layers provide more warmth than similar synthetics. Gloves and socks can provide warmth even when wet.

**Wool Blends** – offers the advantages of the natural fiber and the performance of the synthetics – most of the time it offers cost and weight savings.

**Polyester** – good synthetic material - can have a natural feel. Good for shorts, underwear, shirts, etc... Depending upon the weave and the processing – it can be used for insulation – Polyester Fleece. Polyester does not feel cold on the skin. Lightweight, can be blended with wool, cotton, nylon, etc... to reduce weight in the fabric and provide wicking and breathability to the clothing item. Not usually water repellant or water proof – is usually not the outer layer.

**Nylon** – Synthetic material – used a lot in outer shells – more waterproof than other synthetics. Usually needs to be maintained with some type of waterproofing or restoration product – “feeding” – maintains the water resistance of the material.

“**Gore-Tex**”, “**e-Vent**”, “**SympaTex**”, etc... Trade-marked Waterproof materials used in jackets, boots, pants, stuff sacks, etc...

**Cotton and Cotton Blends** - the saying is that “cotton chills”. A great natural fiber for comfort that is lightweight, when dry. Does retain moisture and in cold weather can become very cold. Cotton has no real water-resistant qualities.

**Polypropylene** – is another synthetic fiber used in thermal underwear and socks – stronger and less flexible than nylons and polyesters. It provides insulation or traps warmth in thin layers. Mostly used in a plastic state for bottles, caps, chairs, cups, etc...

Where to Shop:

#### Online:

[www.campmor.com](http://www.campmor.com)

(Check the HOT DEALS often – they add to the list every day!)

[www.REI.com](http://www.REI.com)

[www.backcountry.com](http://www.backcountry.com)

[www.altrec.com](http://www.altrec.com)

[www.campsaver.com](http://www.campsaver.com)

[www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com)

[www.american-armynavy.com](http://www.american-armynavy.com)

[www.travelcountry.com](http://www.travelcountry.com)

#### Locally:

REI

Outdoor Provision Company

Jesse Browns

Sun & Ski Sports

Dicks

Wal-Mart

Old Navy/Gap

Sports Authority

Bass Pro Shops

## **Checklist:**

### **Raingear:**

Biggest thing to avoid in cold weather is wet. Your body produces moisture to cool you off – even in cold weather. Rain naturally cools the air and brings temperatures down. Water adds weight to packs and clothes. Water can freeze. Above all else, everyone should have good raingear on every trip. As a minimum, everyone should keep in their pack at least a good poncho and an emergency blanket. I recommend having a rain suite – lightweight breathable nylon. It must be waterproof and durable. Most waterproof fabrics are coated or treated (DWR or Durable Water Repellent) and must be maintained regularly in order to continue to work. The costs and the quality range from very low to very high. Shop around. Jackets should have a permanent hood and I recommend pants that you can put on without having to take off your boots. Raingear should have sealed or taped seams. My Campmor brand rain pants cost less than \$30 and they roll-up in a small bag. My Jacket is a Marmont that I got on sale – that packs into one of the pockets for storage (packable). Both are in the top cap of my pack along with my small folded foil emergency blanket that I have never had to use. Again, staying dry is very important and part of that raingear is a good pack cover. It must be waterproof and durable. It will take more abuse than your rainwear. Take your pack with your sleeping bag and a couple of pillows in it to try-on the pack cover. You want to be able to cover your pack and have the cover secured so it cannot blow off. You also need to pack your clothes in a protective, waterproof manner. Start from the inside and work your way out. That can be large zip-lock freezer or storage bags or something more permanent to pack your clothes in – like a dry bag. There are lots of brands and places to buy them – just make sure that they are waterproof, not just water-resistant. Line your pack – even those that are water proof with a large plastic trash bag. If your pack has separate compartments for sleeping bags and clothes – line them both. Speaking of sleeping bags – how about a trash bag inside your sleeping bag stuff sack? Just a little water inside a pack can ruin your trip. Try to keep water out of your pack, but plan for the worse.

### **General Note about Clothing:**

There are lots of Brands and lots of Names for “wicking fabrics” i.e. Under-Armor, Dry-Fit, Omni-Tech, etc... You do not have to buy “name-brands”, but I would suggest studying and examining the Mountain Hardware, Northface, Nike, Columbia, etc.. products so that you will know what you are looking for and how much something should cost. “Starter” brand shirts at Wal-Mart work well and are much less than most of the brands listed above. Shop for bargains! Educate yourself and know what you want to buy, and then give yourself plenty of time to shop. Most of the time, last year’s (or even the year before that) products are still top of the line and on sale. Buy winter stuff during the summer or spring – pay attention to sales for large items – coats, sleeping bags, tents, etc...

### **Underwear:**

Short – look for something other than cotton – wicking drawers will serve you better on a long hike or backpacking trip than white-tighties or boxers.

Long – a lot to choose from – go with synthetic; synthetic/wool blend or wool. Polypropylene can be used in base layers – socks, underwear. 100% cotton should be your last choice. If they are a cotton blend – make sure it is a dual layer, wicking type fabric.

### **Socks:**

Again, there are a lot of choices. Buy socks one pair at a time and wear them all day to see how they work for you. There are natural fibers and blends and synthetics with many different advantages for all types of feet and hikers. On a hiking trip, you can tryout different types and different arrangements. Some hikers wear layers on their feet – thin wicking liners with a heavy outer sock. I wear a very thick “mountaineering” Merino wool sock most of the time, but I do use a wool or cool-max liner with a Wool/synthetic blend or mid-weight wool outer sock. An advantage with the merino wool is that it keeps your feet warm even if they are wet and it also allows your feet to breathe during hot weather.

### **Boots:**

There are a lot of choices. Bottom line – they need to be waterproof and fit well. Try your boots on with your socks and make sure they fit before you go out. (And for those new boots – wear them for about two weeks before you go out on the trail – give them the business before you go out so that they are broken in.) For this area – your boots don't have to be insulated. Boots should be rated for Backpacking and Hiking. You want a good stable foot bed with traction lugs so the boot is not slick. Boots come in a variety of styles and materials. All leather does not mean that the boot is waterproof, but it can be treated (Nikwax, Snoseal or similar) to repel water and seal up seams. Even boots that are waterproof – both leather and fabric should be cleaned and waterproofed on a regular basis. If you can – Gore-Tex lined boots are truly an investment that is worth the money. Cold wet feet can lead to a miserable outing and blisters. Poor fitting boots or loose boots will also lead to blisters and aching pups. Pay attention to your feet – they are the foundation on which you are built.

### **Shirts:**

**Base layer** – go with a wicking base layer – it can be long underwear or short sleeve – polyester, wool, synthetic blends, etc...

**Over-shirts** - layer as many as you feel you need – These are the layers that you want to be able to remove or un-zip. Nylon, polyester, wool, other synthetics – that breathe. As much as possible you want to be able to get the perspiration off of your body and away into the atmosphere. This is where cotton will trap and hold moisture – be careful!

**Jackets** – Hard shell or soft shell – this is the layer to keep water off of you and still breathe from the inside. This also is the layer that holds in some of your body's heat. This can be your raincoat or it can be a windbreaker.

Remember, that when hiking you will produce heat that will rise and it comes out of your body through your head, your extremities and your core. You can regulate your core by removing layers and un-zipping or un-buttoning. When you are “working” (as you hike) you will warm up and you will not need as much on as when you stop. That is why you have outer pockets and bungee cords on the outside of your pack – to store stuff temporarily. Don't over-heat, even on a cool or cold day as that can lead to moisture build-up and chilling. When you stop, as you rest and start to cool down, you put layers back on to maintain body heat and not chill.

### **Pants:**

Go with light synthetics – zip-off legs are popular and make a lot of sense. Most people can hike in shorts in cool weather – the leg muscles produce a lot of heat energy as they are working the hardest. Shorts and rain-pants can provide a lot of comfort when moving. When you are not as active, you will need more – a thin to medium base layer under your rain pants or your hiking pants will work. Again, you have to regulate your own body temperature and comfort. With the Zip Pants and most Rain pants – you can open up the sides or the knees to help vent.

### **Accessories:**

This includes Hats, Gloves, Ear protection, Gaiters, etc...I advise having a small warm cap (fleece) for your sleeping bag – more than likely the top of your head is going to be out of the bag when you sleep and this is good to have to maintain warmth. Gloves on a cold trip are almost a must have. They need to be warm, flexible and waterproof. You can do this with liners and covers or just one good pair of all-purpose. There are leg gaiters and neck gaiters. Both are another layer to keep out snow or cold. Most accessories are per the individual's choice – they help protect and maintain comfort. Follow the basic suggestions listed above pertaining to fabrics and materials when purchasing and be prepared.