OUTDOOR CLOTHING

What should I wear when Mantrailing?

We always recommend that you wear long trousers when Mantrailing. Depending on the location, you maybe navigating through brambles or branches or the terrain could cause you to slip, so covering your legs helps to protect you.

Robust boots, preferably with support for your ankles, will ensure you are prepared for any environment.

We train in a variety of locations – from rural through to urban settings. Weather conditions constantly change therefore being prepared with the appropriate clothing is essential. As well as the technical aspects of protecting you from the weather, which we talk about in greater depth below, this coat also needs to be practical and provide you with convenient pockets to carry that all important reward for your dog and other items such as mobile phone or maps.

Protective clothes for the wonderful British weather

When choosing waterproof outerwear, there are many considerations. For instance, is it actually waterproof or is it 'just' water-resistant? What will you wear it for? How long will it stay waterproof? Is it comfortable? Will it make you sweat?

Fabrics to look for in a waterproof garment

Various fabrics and assembly techniques can be used for waterproof and weatherproof clothing. Polyurethane and PVC, have been used for years — as in the classic yellow fisherman's sou'wester - while Gore-Tex, used in 'technical' outerwear, is also extremely effective in repelling water.

Breathability

While PVC and PU rainwear are effective in repelling water, they are **not** necessarily breathable.

Technologies like Gore-Tex, Analogy Nik Wax or Polartec Power Shield, offer more breathability as they form a porous membrane with pores small enough to let moisture (sweat) out but also prevents rain from getting through.

Note: for optimal comfort, the clothes you wear underneath your jacket are critical; they should be breathable, to promote airflow and prevent you from getting cold.

The reason for this is water, be it sweat or condensation, transmits heat 20 times more effectively than still air.

Therefore, if we replace the air in our clothing with sweat, condensation or rainwater, we lose 95 per cent of our insulation.

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Seams

How well a garment stands up to inclement weather, depends on the way in which the seams are sealed. Some clothing companies do 'critical seam sealing' as opposed to 'total seam' sealing, to save money and only tape/seal the neck seam, shoulder seam or chest but not the sleeves, thus the resulting garment is less waterproof.



Critical seam sealing (taped to seal)



Total seam sealing

Different levels of waterproofing

Here's where things get a little technical!!!

A textile's level of water resistance is measured in column pressure. Imagine a tube that's sitting on top of the fabric, and it's being filled with water. At one point, the water column will be high enough to pressure the water through the membrane. That height of water is a number which indicates that garment's waterproofing ability.

A column pressure of 5,000 millimetres is considered waterproof for basic, everyday activities. To a point the higher the value the better the protection. For example, products created with ©GORE-TEX can range from 15,000mm to 20,000mm in column pressure indicating highly waterproof - subject to variables like seam construction and post-purchase maintenance. However, a value of 40,000mm is achieved by some materials yet their breathability is really poor!

Finding the balance between waterproofing and breathability is crucial.

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Clothing Brands and Cost

Unless you happen to find a bargain then it is true that the many good quality waterproof garments are costly. If you are a 'label person' you may well pay more for a similar quality coat than you might from a non-premium brand or outlet store. Everyone has their personal favourite make or brand, so it is worth doing some research.

Trainers at Mantrailing Scent Dogs have used Páramo Directional Clothing and they are still wearing them after 15 years. Alternatively, many of the Lowland and Mountain Rescue Search teams use Keela clothing.

When looking to buy a waterproof jacket, make sure you check the tags (or, if you're shopping online, read the product specifications), as some brands will list the column pressure measurements, making it easier for you to determine whether the garment will suit your needs. Remember to look for totally sealed seams and then consider your preference for colour, style and cut of the garment. Generally, avoid garments that have extra fleece or lining as this limits your ability to vary layers according to the season. A waterproof winter weight coat is less useful in summer rains…

Not all brands list the column pressure on their products, but, for example, if you see a genuine Gore-Tex logo, you'll know it's going to keep you dry. At the very least, check to see that what you're buying actually says it's waterproof.

How do I care for my waterproof clothing?

Coated and membrane jackets gradually lose their water repellency over time. With the high price of some waterproof jackets, its worth following these tips for prolonging the life of your jacket:

- Scrunching up your jacket can stress the fabric, so carefully fold or hang the jacket to prevent damage. This is important when it's had a good soaking, ideally hang on a hanger and drip-dry.
- Dirt can adversely affect the ability of the jacket to repel water – so keep it clean. Wiping with a damp cloth is often all that is required.
- Avoid excessive washing, as over time this will reduce the coat's water repellency quickly.
- If dirt appears to be impacting the efficiency of the coat, you may need to wash it. Always check the care label! In general, washing your jacket with liquid soap (not bio detergents) will remove dirt, then tumble dry and/or iron on a cool setting if required.
- To restore water repellency, use a wash-in re-proofing product available from outdoor retailers. We can recommend Nik Wax Tech Wash with TX Direct.

Finally, many quality manufacturers provide a bespoke repair /refurbishing service but regretfully no coat, no matter how costly, will last for ever so eventually a new coat will deliver better protection!

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