

# Design School

BEST VALUE

## Mountain Hardwear Thundershadow

OUR TAKE

This shell delivers high-end breathability and protection for a song. \$175; 12 oz.; m's S-XXL, w's XS-XL; [mountainhardwear.com](http://mountainhardwear.com)



### PROTECTION

The hood adjusts precisely on the back and sides via minimalist cinch closures. A wire-stiffened brim kept blowing rain out of our eyes. "I could turn my head without the hood slipping over my face while trying to pick my way along New Hampshire's Great Gulf Trail," says a Vermont tester.

### BREATHABILITY

Mountain Hardwear's new VaporDry, a 2.5-layer, wicking fabric, is speckled with tiny raised dots on the inside. As you start sweating, the theory goes, the dots expand, providing more surface area to grab moisture and dissipate it quickly. Testers say its comfort and breathability are "amazing" on steep hikes in driving rain and muggy mountain bike rides in the 60s. But the lining feels a bit clammy when you take the shell off.

### FIT

One tradeoff for the nice price: a boxy cut. That extra room accommodates bulky layers easily, but "when you have to cinch the hem, you look like a baggy mess," says one tester. The cut also meant the bottom rode up when we raised our arms.



### CLOSURE

The heavy-duty, water-repellent zipper is tough, but tends to snag; smaller-gauge, 12-inch pit zips run more smoothly and boost venting.

### STRETCHINESS

The 40-denier nylon face fabric has mechanical stretch (that is, the flex comes from the weaving process, not elastic yarns), adding a touch of extra mobility for reaching. Protection is solid, too: We weathered a sleet-cyclocross race, a storm with 60-mph gusts on Mt. Washington, and four days of nonstop rain on the Colorado Trail without a drop sneaking through.

### STORAGE

You get plentiful stash options with two hand pockets and two chest pockets—big enough for most smartphones—plus an inner mesh pouch tucked inside one of the chest pockets (the women's version only has one chest pocket).