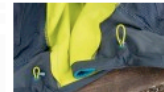


Full Article: <http://www.gearinstitute.com/hiking/softshell-jackets/item/mountain-hardwear-men-s-dragon-hooded-jacket>

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR MEN'S DRAGON HOODED JACKET



BREATHABILITY

The Mountain Hardwear Dragon Hooded Jacket combines heavier "Chockstone" fabric with lighter, more air permeable "AirShield" panels in the chest, armpits and lower hem to address durability, warmth and breathability. This mapped array of fabrics allowed ample breathability for moderately aerobic activities such as rock climbing and hiking. The heavier softshell material and the fleece lining is overwhelmed, even in near freezing temperatures, by generated heat and vapor when aerobic intensity rises to levels typical of heavily loaded/steep approach hiking or trail running.

DURABILITY

The Chockstone outer soft shell fabric used in the majority of the Mountain Hardwear Hooded Dragon Jacket looks showroom fresh even after almost continuous use with shoulder straps, hip belts, and harnesses in rocky environments. Nothing in the jacket hints at being anything short of tough and enduring. Repeated washings have yet to hinder the DWR coating's ability to bead water.

WEATHERPROOFING

The Mountain Hardwear Dragon Hooded Jacket is highly wind resistant. The fleece lining and heavier body fabric adds some warmth, making this jacket straddle the gap somewhat between shell and insulating layer. The jacket worked well as a single layer on top of a tech tee or base layer during shoulder season conditions. The DWR coating is one of the best in the test, beading water extremely well during light showers.

FIT/COMFORT

The fit around the torso accommodates layers without being too loose and the shoulders are ample for those with athletic builds. Both torso and arms were noticeably on the longer side, making overhead reaches with wrists covered while staying tucked into harnesses a reality. These longer dimensions combined with slightly elastic fabric worked well for actively climbing. The lower hem's elastic cord is adjustable at both sides via push button cord locks. The wrists have a very wide range of adjustment (can fit over some glove gauntlets) via long Velcro tabs. The interior of the Mountain Hardwear Dragon Hooded Jacket is comfortable on bare skin.

COMPRESSIBILITY

The Mountain Hardwear Dragon Hooded jacket's heavier fabric and fleece lining and large hood hinder the compressibility; the jacket will shrink down to the size of a cantaloupe. This ding in compressibility can be tolerated in shoulder seasons if an insulating layer can be left at home.

FEATURES

The Mountain Hardwear Dragon Hooded Jacket feature list gives a nod to the alpine traveler. The longer sleeves and torso were welcome when climbing and the hood proved excellent with a helmet. The pocket configuration is alpine oriented: two zipped handwarmer pockets, one zipped exterior chest pocket (all of which are mesh lined to act as vents), two interior stretch mesh torso pockets and one zipped interior chest pocket ensure essentials are at the ready. The main zipper can open from both ends and the wrists have a very large adjustment range via Velcro tabs. The large hood fits helmets excellently and adjusts both in the front and around the back; the generous brim adjusts in shape with a moldable wire insert. This hood is the best functioning of the test when used with a helmet but can be a bit cumbersome when not being used at all.

THE GOOD

- Good wind resistance
- Excellent hood for helmets
- Plenty of pockets
- Durable fabric

THE BAD

- Bulky hood can get in the way when not used
- Limited compressibility
- Heaviest jacket in test

THE VERDICT

The Mountain Hardwear Dragon Hooded Jacket is a highly wind resistant jacket with an interior fleece and mesh lining, making it warm and comfortable as a solo layer in shoulder seasons. These features place the jacket in the grey area between being a true shell and an insulating layer. The Dragon Hooded Jacket has a longer fit in both the torso and arms that works well for climbing movement and the array of pockets and substantial hood (that works great with helmets) add value for the alpine adventurer. All those features though put this jacket on the heavier side.

HOW WE TESTED IT

The soft shell jackets in this test were used over a three-month period in Central Texas winter/spring conditions while hiking, guiding rock climbing, personal rock climbing and while mountaineering in Central Mexico. This tester is 6 feet tall, has a 32" waist and weighs 167 lbs.

For more reviews beyond this 2017 test, check out our other soft shell jacket tests, storm shell jacket tests, insulated jacket tests, and other related hiking and camping gear tests.