

# The Adventure Blog

Full Article: <http://theadventureblog.blogspot.no/2017/03/gear-closet-mountain-hardwear.html>

## Gear Closet: Mountain Hardwear Thundershadow Jacket

Good rain gear is essential for any outdoor adventure, particularly in the spring when frequent showers make it a challenge to get outside as often as we'd like. The right rain jacket can be a revelation however, allowing you to comfortably and easily enjoy your favorite activities no matter the weather. That's what I found in the new *Thundershadow Jacket* from Mountain Hardwear, a category-defining product that is a dramatic improvement over my previous rain jacket.



Before I started writing this review, I stopped to think about the last time I wrote about a dedicated rain jacket. Looking through my notes, I saw that it was exactly seven years ago to the day that I posted a review of the *Helium Jacket* from Outdoor Research, which at the time was one of my favorite pieces of gear. But times have changed, and fabrics and materials have evolved dramatically over that period of time, providing better all around protection with greatly improved breathability, something that is key to any piece of waterproof gear. I still wear that *Helium Jacket* on a regular basis, and it has accompanied me on trips all over the world. But, as my gear has improved over the years, I've noticed that it doesn't perform as well as I would like.

With that in mind, I was eager to see how far good rain gear has come since I wrote that review. So when I was offered a *Thundershadow Jacket* to test, I jumped at the chance. It has been fairly rainy where I live recently, which has provided plenty of opportunity to put the new jacket through its paces. What I discovered was that I could indeed have a rain jacket that provided a protective layer from moisture on the outside, while still allowing the moisture underneath to escape as well.

Mountain Hardwear used its proprietary VaporDry fabrics when creating the *Thundershadow*. Those materials have been tested and perfected in other products over the years, and have proven themselves to be extremely efficient at not only keeping moisture out, but venting excess heat and perspiration as well. As a result, I stayed much drier than I did with my old rain jacket and didn't find myself peeling out wet clothes after a particularly energetic hike or run. That couldn't be said about the *Helium*, which often left me almost as wet as the rain if I wore it for extended periods of time while working hard on the trail.

Of course, waterproof and breathable fabrics are nothing new to the outdoor industry, even if they have come a long way over the past few years. But Mountain Hardwear also managed to mix its VaporDry materials with a 40D ripstop fabric that has some surprisingly good stretching properties as well. This prevents the *Thundershadow* from inhibiting your range of motion, which makes it great option for not just hiking and backpacking, but trail running, mountain biking, and other outdoor activities too. And since those same fabrics are lightweight and highly packable (the jacket stuffs into its own pocket), it is a great choice for travelers as well.

Weighing in at 11.8 ounces, the *Thundershadow* isn't the lightest rain shell on the market, but it isn't especially bulky either. At that weight, it hits the mark for performance and durability, without adding too many extra ounces to your pack. If you're extremely weight conscious you may want to look elsewhere, but for the rest of us this jacket strikes a nice balance.

Other features of the *Thundershadow* jacket include a large, fully-featured adjustable hood that is helmet compatible and a pair of zippered chest pockets that are accessible even while wearing a pack. There are also pit zips that provide even more ventilation for when things really get heated up, although to date I haven't had to use them much. I imagine as temperatures continue to warm into the spring, they'll come in handy though.

Priced at \$175, this isn't a rain jacket for your casual outdoor enthusiast. But for those of us who demand good performance and a high level of comfort from our gear, and frequently find ourselves in the backcountry when the weather takes a turn for the worse, this is a jacket that will prove invaluable. It offers an impressive blend of both protection from the elements and a high level of breathability, two factors that will help to keep you dry. Its stretch properties will make the *Thundershadow* a favorite with outdoor athletes as well, which makes it very easy to recommend to readers of *The Adventure Blog*.

If you're in the market for a new rain jacket this year, this is an excellent option. I waited far too long to upgrade mine, but now I'm very glad to have this one in my gear closet.

Buy online at [REI.com](http://REI.com).