

Discover Hiking in the San Juan Islands

# Washington TRAILS

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## Harvest Hiking

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Sep+Oct 2014

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# When it Rains...

As hikers in the Northwest, we're no strangers to wet weather. But we don't let it deter us from getting out and enjoying our favorite trails in the rainy spring and fall. If we did, we would miss all those gushing waterfalls, blooming wildflowers and vivid fall colors. We just throw on the rain gear, lace up our boots and head out. But the rain gear you choose will determine how enjoyable your experience is—whether you'll stay dry and comfortable or wet and soggy. The gear reviewers here at WT have tested some of the latest rain gear offerings to help keep you dry on trail this fall.

Select your rain gear for the type of hiking or backpacking you normally do, considering these factors:

- ▶▶ **Weight:** If you are dayhiking or trail running, select gear that is lightweight and breathable; if you are backpacking or climbing, choose gear that is heavier and more durable.
- ▶▶ **Fit:** Choose gear that will allow you to layer up or down as temperature and conditions change. Technical wear often has a trimmer fit and may require you to size up.
- ▶▶ **Vents & Seams:** For staying comfortable and dry, choose gear with zip or pocket vents for regulating your temperature; taped seams keep the jacket from seeping.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE Sierra Designs Stretch Rain

You wouldn't think there was much farther to go with rain shell innovation, but Sierra Designs has discovered the way—and it's so obvious you'll wonder why it's never been done before: backpack hipbelt accommodation. The Stretch Rain jacket (1) features zippered sides that allow you to buckle your pack's hipbelt under the front of the jacket, eliminating that annoying bulking we're all too familiar with. On top of that, the stretchy fabric—which sheds moisture like nobody's business—is buttery-soft and flexible. There's more: add in a lay-flat hood, die-cut vents and large pockets for a practically perfect rain shell. \$200

**Score: 4.5/5**      **Bonus Points: Attractive tailored design for men and women.**



## ECONOMY Sierra Designs Microlight 2

If you're after a light rain jacket that's as effective and packable as it is affordable, look no further than the Microlight 2 (2). This was my go-to jacket for every adventure this summer, from hiking to biking to boating. It probably won't keep you dry in a full-on cloudburst—look to one of the heavy-duty selections for that—but it is perfect for keeping dry in light rain and as a shoulder season shell layer. It even doubles nicely as a windbreaker. \$49!

**Score: 4/5**      **Bonus Points: Small enough for any backpack or purse.**

## ULTRALIGHT Mountain Hardwear Super Light Plasmic

First there came the Plasmic jacket, Mountain Hardwear's no-frills rain shell. Lightweight, breathable and at an attractive price, there wasn't much to improve upon. But wait—now there's the Super Light Plasmic jacket (3). Just as dependable as its previous incarnation, the Super Light weighs in at a scant 7.7 ounces! The comfortable standard cut lets you layer up underneath without bulking, eliminating the need for a heavier hard shell. \$200

**Score: 4.1/5**      **Bonus Points: All you need, nothing you don't.**



## HEAVY-DUTY Outdoor Research (OR) Clairvoyant

OR has accomplished what many gear companies are still struggling with: a women's rain jacket that's as feminine as it is hard-core. The Clairvoyant (4) offers beautiful colors and a soft-to-the-touch feel—on top of being incredibly good at repelling moisture. I stayed dry even in complete downpours. Other great features: a ponytail-friendly moldable brim and cinchable hood, a roomier fit that makes layering a breeze and non-slip zipper pulls. \$325

**Score: 4.4/5**      **Bonus Points: So cute it can be worn on trail or around town.**

## DON'T FORGET YOUR LOWER HALF Rain Pants

**The North Face Venture Pants** are an affordable, dependable pair that feature leg zips for easy on and off, and a stash pocket for quick packing. \$80

For minimizing pack weight and still being prepared for anything, the **Outdoor Research Helium Pants** are just 5.9 ounces of Pertex Shield+ protection. \$120

A heavy-duty rain shell that feels more like a casual garment, the **Helly Hansen Loke Pants** offer great flexibility and a mesh liner for the ultimate in comfort. \$80