

# Personal clothing .....

..... must be capable of protecting the wearer under the best & worst weather conditions. Sunburn has the potential to be as much of a setback as frostbite.

Clothing is a matter of personal choice & availability, with compromise frequently the best approach. Think in terms of an **inner layer, middle layer & outer layer**.

Whatever fabrics are used it is customary to think of the inner layer absorbing perspiration, the middle layer(s) to provide insulation & the outer layer to be waterproof. Garments should where practical be loose fitting either to trap air or to allow it to circulate as the need arises. The outer waterproof layer should if possible have full-length zips, with adjustable fastenings at the cuffs, waist & neck.

Insulation is provided by air trapped between the fibres of the cloth & between the layers of garments. For example; two light pullovers or fleeces provide more warmth than one thick one. There is also the advantage that you can regulate your temperature more easily.

Clothing loses most of its insulating capability when wet, whether from rain or perspiration, so it is important to keep clothing as dry as possible. It is however preferable to have warm damp clothing from perspiration, inside your waterproofs, rather than cold damp clothing from the rain or snow.

## Boots

Of all the clothing & equipment used nothing will have a greater effect on the enjoyment, or otherwise, of any adventure than your footwear. The range & choice of boots is potentially bewildering. Here are a few general pointers:-

- Vibram/commando style sole. Avoid shallow shoe/trainer treads.
- Good ankle support.
- If leather boots, manufactured from as few pieces as possible – stitching holes are a weak spot for the wet to find a way in.
- If fabric boots, look for a waterproof liner (Gore-Tex being one brand) Do not fall into the trap of thinking fabric boots don't need to be reproofed. They do, but not as often as leather boots.
- A sewn in (bellows) tongue will help keep the wet out.
- Large enough to wear with two pairs of socks.
- D-rings & hooks make it easier to put them on & take them off.
- "Wellington" boots, which give no ankle support, are best avoided.
- Borrowing boots is okay so long as they have not been moulded to someone else's feet. If they have, you are borrowing trouble!

## Socks

Socks have to perform 3 functions: cushion your feet, absorb perspiration & provide insulation. Two pairs of loop stitch socks are generally accepted as best. If not loop stitch turn the socks inside out so that any seams are against the boot, not your foot. Whatever the type, the inner pair moves with your foot, the outer with the boot, thereby reducing the likelihood of soreness or blisters.

## Trousers

Trousers should be loose fitting. Cotton, wool, tweed fabrics or any mixture thereof, are acceptable.

Jeans (denim) are not suitable, particularly once wet, and best avoided.

Shorts are acceptable – but it can be prudent to take over trousers.

## Gaiters

Gaiters are invaluable in muddy & wet conditions, where they help to keep your feet and lower legs warm and dry. The zippered style will enable you to put them on or take them off without removing your boots. When cleaning gaiters do not use detergent. Reproofing from time to time is required.

## Shirts

Long flannel/woollen mixture shirts are effective, as are most fleece type garments. A collar which can be turned up will help avoid a sunburnt neck.

## Pullovers & or fleeces

Medium or lightweight. Ideally loose fitting, with long sleeves.

## Waterproofs

Ideally, a knee length jacket with a wired hood, large enough for a hat to be worn under, full length two way zips & cuff closures should be your aim. Over trousers often need to be put on & taken off over boots, so it is essential to ensure they are baggy or have a zip at the ankles.

## Headwear & gloves

A balaclava is probably the most effective. For those who wear spectacles a peaked cap will help keep rain off the lenses.

Gloves or mittens should be long enough to protect the wrists & tuck inside the jacket sleeves.

## To conclude –

Clothing & footwear is a matter of personal choice, with compromise often required.

Arguably the most important items in the British Isles, are waterproof boots & outer garments. **Never** wash, *or allow others*, to machine wash waterproof items. Modern **waterproofing** is **actively degraded by** conventional **detergents**, found in most soap powders and liquids.