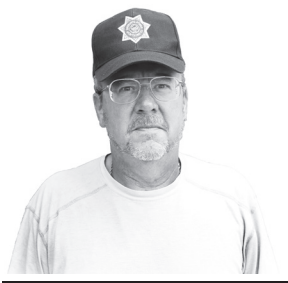


# Expensive or cheap outdoor clothing?



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

One discussion I hear a great deal amongst outdoor folks is the expensive versus cheap outdoor clothing debate. Some argue “you get what you pay for,” while the other camp is “you are just making an outdoor fashion statement.” Both sides are right up to a point.

It was a lot easier when I was a kid. My grandmother was not about to spend hard earned money on a fashion statement. I wore clodhopper boots, blue jeans, and wool shirts in the winter, and PF Flyers, cut-off blue jeans, and T-shirts in the summer. Everything was two sizes larger so I would “grow into it.”

The outdoor clothing, the stuff you wear fishing, hunting, camping, and hiking, was all from Stuart’s Army Surplus store. Old army fatigues rolled up because they were two sizes too big, all well-worn from battle. Throw on a boonie hat, a jacket, poncho, and head to the woods. Our little group look like the losing army after the Battle of the Bulge. It matters not what the others said, our clothing was impractical and unfashionable, but it worked for a bunch of kids.

I have two friends that can be used as an example here, each representing different views about outdoor clothing. One person, who we will call Rodney, is in the expensive/fashion camp for clothes. On a fishing trip in Alberta, he spent every morning showering, shaving, trimming, and selecting his ensemble for the day.

Rodney looked like a fashion statement in a fishing catalog. Pressed shirts and shorts, spotless boat shoes, and a brand-new cap. The essence of his cologne filled the air around the boat. I am sure it annoyed the large lake trout we were up



Your outdoor clothing does not have to be expensive as long as it is comfortable, serves the purpose, and holds up to the demands of your outdoor activity. Tyler Rackay’s ensemble seems to be working just fine for him here on this cold morning. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

there fishing for as much as it annoyed the rest of us.

The other camp is occupied by another friend whom I shall call Bob. Bob went to Ontario with me for a 10-day excursion. Bob never changed his outfit of blue jeans and wool shirt the entire trip. Bob avoided the shower at all costs, saying it would ruin his image as a woodsman. By the end of the trip, Bob looked and smelled bad enough to give a roadkill eating coyote the dry heaves. On the last day, under duress, he showered. It was a good thing too because Bob was going to accidentally fall off the dock into the lake.

Over the years, I have found lower-priced clothing to come up short in durability and performance. Start with rain gear. I have a cheaper set, around a hundred bucks of packable Space Rain, sold by Cabela’s. While this gear is very light and packable, it lacks dura-

bility. I carry it in my pack as a “just in case” for those summer showers.

I spent a week in the Arctic Tundra, where it rained all day, every day, and after the second day, my Space Rain looked like it got into an argument with a roll of barbed wire and lost. I patched holes until I used up my repair kit, then went to duct tape. Add to that the stuff does not breathe, so perspiration from activity meant I was as wet inside as it was outside.

The next trip, I invested in some gear made by Sitka, called Cloudburst. This product was made from Gore-Tex and other materials, so it was waterproof and breathable. I climbed through the willows and thickets all week and never damaged the clothing. This set cost north of 300 bucks, but it will survive many outdoor adventures. I will probably fall apart before this stuff does.

Another item I decided not to skimp on was my

outdoor jacket. I chose the Sitka Stratus jacket. The Stratus took the place of 3 other jackets, so figure that into the cost equation, as the jacket cost around \$350. This jacket is waterproof, windproof, and has a good lining, so it is good for all but the coldest of winter days. It is also very quiet, so you don’t sound like a bag of potato chips walking through the woods.

Pants seem to really take a beating outdoors. Blue jeans hold up well, but they are not water resistant, windproof, or particularly flexible or comfortable when hiking. This is where I went to a company called Kuuiu and chose their Guide pants.

Like the Sitka line, they are waterproof and windproof. They wick away moisture well, dry fast, are very quiet and you move easily in them. These pants are very durable and will outlast those blue jeans by years. The tag for these I had to hide from my wife, \$180.

People who do a lot of fishing might want to consider better clothes over the normal cotton-based line. I learned about that when we fished every day in the Florida Keys. Your shorts and shirts get covered daily in sweat, slime, and fish blood. At the end of the day, your clothes look more like a crime scene than an outfit. These stains will not wash out of cheaper cotton clothing. After five trips, the stuff looks like it was never washed and is ready for the trash.

Enter here the outdoor clothing made by such companies as Tarponwear, Columbia, and Huk. These manufacturers produce clothing that is lightweight, vented to keep you cool, wicks away perspiration, dries fast, and the fish stains wash out more easily than cotton. They are also durable, far outlasting the cheaper clothes. I have Tarponwear shirts that are veterans of 50 trips on the water.

There are a couple points to consider before you purchase outdoor clothing. One is the amount of usage it is going to see. If you wear a jacket on just a couple trips a year, inexpensive may be worth it. Sort of a use it and chuck it philosophy. On the other hand, if you will have an item out 40 times a year, better look for quality.

You can luck out with inexpensive clothing sometimes. Look at the quality of the stitching, number of threads per inch and material. If it has threads hanging on the rack, it probably won’t last. Remember that most of the more expensive performance lines of clothing have a warranty. The jacket from mighty mart does not.

Over the years, I have found the lower priced clothing to perform badly. Camouflage patterns fade quickly on hunting clothes, fishing clothes stain up and tear, and most have no weather resistance whatsoever.

I won’t throw out there that “you get what you pay for line,” because sometimes that is not true. For the most part, higher-end clothing does outlast and out preform the lower priced lines. Sometimes there are bargains to be found on expensive gear, and I try to take advantage of them. Read the labels and reviews of the clothes before you buy.

The old war surplus we wore as kids did not perform, was not comfortable, and did not provide any protection from the elements at all. On the other hand, the stuff outlasted anything made today. Consider that it went through a war or two before we got our hands on it.

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# Assessment, draft decision available for Monarch’s No Name Basin projects

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

The Pike-San Isabel National Forests & Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands and the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests announce the availability of an environmental assessment and draft decision notice for the Monarch Mountain No Name Basin Projects.

Monarch Mountain first opened to the public in 1939 and is one of the oldest ski areas in Colorado; it operates on National Forest System lands under a special use permit. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service has completed an environmental assessment in response to an application submitted by Monarch to implement projects from their accepted 2011 Master Development Plan.

The projects are located on the Gunnison Ranger District of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests adjacent to Monarch’s existing ski area in No Name Basin. Through a delegation of authority, the responsible official for this decision is Forest and Grassland Supervisor Ryan Nehl of the Pike-San Isabel National Forests & Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands. The responsible official is planning to approve the project for implementation. The proposed actions include the following:

- Increase Monarch’s special use permit area from 769 acres to 1,146 acres to include No Name Basin;
- Construct a new 2,700-foot-long fixed grip chairlift with a

carrier size of up to four people;

- Construct an up to 8,600-foot-long permanent access road from the existing SUP area to the bottom terminal of the proposed chairlift;
  - Develop approximately 62 acres of traditionally cleared ski terrain and 75 acres of selective tree removal ski terrain, including low intermediate, intermediate and advanced-intermediate terrain;
  - Build a warming hut and restroom adjacent to the bottom terminal of the proposed chairlift and
  - Realignment of approximately 700 feet of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.
- “The Forest Service has completed a thorough review of Monarch’s proposed projects and this decision con-



Monarch Mountain has proposed new projects in an area adjacent to its existing ski area in No Name Basin. (Courtesy photo/USDA)

siders their effects and significance,” said Salida District Ranger Perry Edwards. “We look forward to continuing our work together planning the implementation of these improvements for visitors to the National Forest.”

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. This decision is subject to a 45-day objection period. The draft decision notice and environmental assessment are available for viewing at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/psic-c/?project=61373>.

Upon conclusion of the objection process, projects may be implemented. If you have any questions regarding the Monarch No Name Basin Projects, please contact Mountain Resort Program Manager Don Dressler at [donald.dressler@usda.gov](mailto:donald.dressler@usda.gov) or 720-391-0626.