

# Winter warmers

There's so much great stuff out there to keep you warm and dry that you've got no excuse to hibernate come June. Here's our pick of the best new outdoor clothing for guys and girls.

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## FOR MEN

We've dressed our imaginary man for a cold and wet Western Cape winter.

### 1 Icebreaker top

Icebreaker stuff is pricey, but the quality is unsurpassed. Although this top feels like cotton knit, it's actually made of 100% merino wool – a renewable resource from the South Island of New Zealand. Not only is wool warmer than a synthetic base layer, it also breathes better and feels better against your skin. Most importantly, it smells less. You can wear this top for 10 days straight and still risk a hug. **R950** [adventureinc.co.za](#)

### 2 Hi-Tec Dakota Microfleece

Microfleece is softer and more resistant to pilling than regular fleece. It's also

more breathable. Use the Dakota as an extra insulation layer if it's really cold or as a solitary layer if it's not so chilly. It's a demure top that doesn't draw attention to itself – you can only see the Hi-Tec branding when the collar is up. **R250** [hi-tecdirect.co.za](#)

### 3 Columbia Regen rain jacket

I could have done with one of these when I was living in Vietnam. It would have been perfect for surviving the tropical storms that regularly assailed me while I was riding my motorbike. It's 100% waterproof but also breathable. All exposed zips are sealed and the waist pockets zip closed.

The hood folds out of the way when not in use; when needed it scrunches around your face leaving only your eyes and nose exposed. Velcro tabs on the wrists allow you to create a seal around your gloves. All in all, an excellent jacket. **R1 300** [columbiasportswear.co.za](#)

### 4 First Ascent Derma-Tec long Johns

If you can't justify spending the cash on Icebreaker long Johns, these are a close second. They use "body-mapping technology", which is a fancy way of saying they keep the bits warm that need to be kept warm while allowing the other bits to breathe. They're made

of polypropylene, so you'll need to wash them more often than woollen ones, but unless you're planning to walk to the South Pole that's probably not a problem. **R450** [firstascent.co.za](#)

### 5 K-Way Boulder pants

These are not fashion items. Fleece tops are bad enough, but fleece trousers are probably the least flattering things around. That said, they're exceptionally warm and very comfy. And if you're wearing rain pants over them, who's going to know? Zips at the ankles allow you to put them on over boots; they have durable knee pads and zip-up pockets so your cellphone won't fall out. I found



### EXTREME PROTECTION

Wear these over your pants when it's bucketing down.

the waist a bit baggy in relation to the rest of the trousers, and I didn't like the drawstring: the ends often got lost in the waistband. Elastic would have been better. **R400** [capeunionmart.co.za](#)

### 6 Terra-Firma Adrenaline socks

The importance of a good pair of socks can never be underestimated. These feature a blend of 42% Cape mohair, 42% pure wool and a bit of synthetic fibre for strength. They're warm and they dry quickly, which means there's less chance of getting blisters. **R80** [trappers.co.za](#)

### 7 Hi-Tec Paraboots

These boots are unlike anything I've ever come across. They look like a cross

between gumboots and hiking boots, and they're completely amphibious. I'm not sure I'd wear them for normal hiking, but if I knew I was going somewhere really wet and soggy they'd be the first thing in my backpack. I like that you don't have to tie your laces, and the fit is super-spongy. The neoprene lining means that even if water does get in at the ankles, you won't be too uncomfortable. They boots dried really quickly when I did get them wet. **R1 300** [hi-tecdirect.co.za](#)

### 8 First Ascent Dry-Lite pants

Extra-long ankle zips enable you to put these on over even the bulkiest boots and the poppers allow you to make the legs nice and tight around the boots once they're on. Made of so-called "Vapour-Text"

fabric, they're waterproof and windproof but also breathable. The zip-up pockets are nice, but the zips aren't sealed. **R900** [firstascent.co.za](#)

### 9 First Ascent Powerstretch beanie

This super-lightweight fleece beanie will keep your noggin warm no matter the weather. It folds up really small and can easily fit into a pocket if you overheat. One size fits all, but it was a bit tight on my (admittedly enormous) head. **R160** [firstascent.co.za](#)

### 10 Black Diamond Glide gloves

These gloves look pretty bulky, but you can easily drive a car or make a cup of tea while wearing them. This

is thanks to the stretchy nylon shell and the fact that the palm and fingers are made from goat leather, which is surprisingly soft and supple. They're also 100% waterproof – I dunked my hand in the pool to make sure – and exceptionally warm. **R565** [rammountain.co.za](#)

### 11 Terra-Firma scarf

There are loads of polar-fleece scarves out there. What sets this one apart is that it's reasonably priced, it's lightweight and it's extra long. Thanks to its length you can wear it the way I like to: doubled over and threaded through the loop. The discreet navy colour means it will be just as at home in the office as in the elements. **R109** [trappers.co.za](#)

**ALL ABOUT LAYERING**

Knowing how to layer can save your bacon on a winter hike. Luckily it's not rocket science.

- The base layer is against your skin. It should wick (transport) the moisture away from your skin. A merino-wool knit is the ultimate base layer, but there are good synthetic alternatives.
- The mid or insulation layer is there to trap heat in. Wool, goose down or polar fleece all work well. It's important to keep this layer dry.
- The shell protects the mid layer from the elements. It could be a simple windbreaker, or a technical mountaineering jacket. Your shell should allow moisture (sweat) to escape – if it doesn't, your other layers will be pointless.

**LOOK AFTER YOUR CLOTHES**

Few people realise that even the most technical items – down jackets and Gore-Tex trousers – can be washed in a regular machine. But don't reach for the Omo... Nikwax makes a wide range of technical detergents like Down Wash and Tech Wash. Find the one that's right for your garment and follow the instructions on the bottle. Nikwax also makes spray-on treatments to spruce up the waterproofing of your jacket or shoes.

**R50–R100** @rammountain.co.za



**MORE FOIL**  
The Mighty jacket also comes in a long-sleeve version.

**FOR WOMEN**

Our imaginary woman is dressed for a cold but dry weekend in the mountains.

**1 Columbia Mighty Lite sleeveless jacket**

You'd be amazed how warm this jacket is. It's mostly due to the "Omni-Heat" lining – a reflective silver foil like the inside of a space blanket – that stops your body heat from escaping. Luckily it's a fully breathable space blanket! My only issue is that if it's unzipped the foil is exposed, making you look a bit like a jacket potato. Also, the outside is only water-resistant, not waterproof.

**R900** (R1 200 for the long-sleeve version) @columbiasportswear.co.za

**2 First Ascent Plum jacket**

I can tell you how lightweight this windbreaker is, but you won't believe me until you've actually worn it. The "Microtex" fabric is so thin that the entire jacket folds into its own pocket! If it's really cold you can wear it over a sleeveless jacket; or over a regular fleece if it's not too nippy. It doesn't come with a hood but it's not actually a rain jacket.

**R500** @firstascent.co.za

**3 K-Way Kaite Moisture Manager top**

What will clothing people think up next? This top has something called "Cool Touch", which seems bizarre for a winter garment. Basically, it wicks moisture and heat to the outer surface so it's cool to wear on its own but concentrates heat in the insulation layer if worn with one. Tech-speak aside, it's a decent entry-level base layer.

**R200** @capeunionmart.co.za



**RAINY DAYS**  
Wear these over your pants to stay dry in a drizzle.



**4 Capestorm Furnace leggings**

These leggings contain polyester "Wick-Dry" technology on the outer surface, which allows sweat to escape before it's had a chance to dampen the fabric. They're made in South Africa so they should last many years. And they don't look like underwear so you could wear them with a pair of shorts for a winter walk.

**R250** @capestorm.co.za

**5 K-Way Olympe trousers**

These pants have it all: They're waterproof, windproof and fashionable. The webbing belt is comfortable and cool, and the zip-up pockets are handy. The

ankles have an elasticated inner and a zip-up outer: This way no rain will get into your boots and you'll look smart enough for a job interview.

**R700** @capeunionmart.co.za

**6 Mac In A Sac pants**

Unlike many things that fold into little bags, these require no origami skills. They're so lightweight and the bag is so spacious that I was able to pack them away with my eyes closed. Despite being waterproof, windproof and breathable, I wouldn't recommend these trousers for hiking the Fish River as they're too delicate to handle scrapes on rocks and branches. Instead of pockets they have slits that allow you to access your real pockets: clever, but not exactly

waterproof! Excellent for hikes where you expect a little wind and light rain.

**R350** @trappers.co.za

**7 Black Diamond MidWeight liner gloves**

These gloves are so nimble that you can type while wearing them – I'm doing it right now! They're actually designed to be worn under the gloves featured in the men's section, but in dry South African conditions they're all you need. They dry quickly too.

**R265** @rammountain.co.za

**8 Buff Polar Thermal Pro**

You're probably familiar with Buff, the multifunctional headwear that

can be worn as a scarf, bandana or balaclava. The Polar Thermal Pro features a tube of Polartec fabric tacked on to a standard Buff to keep your head, neck and face warm regardless of the weather. This headgear fits most noggins.

**R290** @adventureinc.co.za

**9 Rocky Cobra boots**

Although Rocky is most famous for its sandals, it also makes some excellent closed shoes. The Cobras are lightweight but tough. They're also 100% waterproof – as long as you don't go deeper than your ankles. And they look as snazzy as hiking boots can look.

**R700** @rockysa.co.za

# MY STUFF

**Cathy O'Dowd** was the first South African to climb Everest and the first woman to climb the mountain from both sides. She now lives in the Pyrenees and travels frequently. She conducted this interview from northern Norway, where she was watching out-of-control reindeer tow hapless ski-jockeys around a racetrack.



**I never travel without** my Kindle. I love the fact that I can carry a thousand different books with me on something the size and weight of a single paperback. It goes into my rucksack if I'm ski-touring and into my handbag if I'm on a work trip.

**My favourite piece of winter clothing** is my North Face Elysium Jacket. It's fashionable enough to wear with jeans, small and light enough to scrunch into a pack if I think I might need a belay jacket on a long rock route, and warm enough to make a real difference even at high altitude. I had it with me on Nanga Parbat in the Himalayas and it didn't let me down.

**Biggest waste of money?** Shoes! No, not high heels; shoes for skiing, rock climbing, trail running... My feet must be a weird size because the shoes I buy always feel fine in the shop, but they let me down when I've been wearing them for a few hours. I have too many pairs languishing in the basement because I didn't get the right fit.



## WISH LIST

### Got the time?

If you love the mountains and you love technology, you'll love the Garmin Fenix.

**What is it?** It's a GPS and a watch with a mind-boggling array of settings and options. If you're a first-time user, all you need to know about it is the orange button: Press it to activate the GPS and record your every move. You can hook the Fenix up to your computer to plan your route or to analyse your performance once you're back.

**Who would want one?** A hiker, trail runner or general adventurer who's also a nerd. It's not a watch for the casual jogger or the guy who gets confused trying to PVR the rugby.

**Verdict** It's a bit too big and plasticky to wear as an everyday timepiece, so it's unlikely to replace your Casio. But it will definitely replace your compass, barometer, altimeter and thermometer... at a price.

**Price** R4 300 ↗ garmin.co.za

