# *WILDERNESS HIKING PANTS—COMPARISONS AND OPTIONS*

Provided by: HighCountryExplorations.com

| *Fabric/Construction* | *Pros and Cons* | *Additional Information* |
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| **POLYESTER FLEECE** | | |
| Regular fleece | Inexpensive; not waterproof or windproof; warm when wet; quick to dry; snow sticks to fleece fabric | Commonly made by Polartec under different brand names in 100-200-300 thicknesses; |
| Windblock fleece | Wind and water resistance varies with degree of windblock; thicker pants too warm at times unless have side zips. | Varying degrees of windblock laminated into fabric; often referred to as a "Soft Shell" (see separate category below). |
| Tightly woven microfleece | See "Soft Shells" in 4th category below for details. | |
| **SOFT FINISH WOVEN NYLON** | | |
| Regular long pants | Wind and water resistant; quick to dry when wet; thinner weaves subject to rips | Varying thicknesess with varying degrees of windblock, warmth and durability. |
| Convertible pants (I.e., zip off legs) | Wind and water resistant; quick to dry when wet | Varying thickness with varying degrees of windblock, warmth and durability. |
| Shorts, kilts, skirts, skorts, knickers | Combo is lighter weight than long pants supplemented with tights or long underwear | Often supplemented with tights or long underwear; some hearty types wear shorts year around in all but the worst weather. In the Pacific Northwest, often referred to as the Mountaineers uniform when supplemented by long underwear. |
| **HARD SHELL WOVEN NYLON** | | |
| Wind pants highly breathable | Lightweight; highly breathable and wind resistant; varying degrees of water resistance | Usually ripstop nylon or tightly woven polyester. |
| Waterproof overpants | Usually lightweight enough to be stuffed into small spaces for quick access; not breathable; moisture build up unless have side zips. | Usually ripstop nylon; often carried to supplement shorts when weather turns bad. |
| Waterproof and breathable, unlined | Not breathable enough under heavy exertion and humidity; moisture build up unless have side zips; significant weight reduction when not carrying separate storm pants. | Usually Goretex, eVent or other proprietary fabric |

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| Waterproof and breathable, lined | Often expensive; great for stop and go activities like skiing; too warm at times even with side zips. | Often include side zips; usually lined with polyester batting that is low in water absorbency; traditionally referred to as skier or snowboarder pants. |
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| **SOFT SHELLS** | | |
| High performance,multi-component fabrics developed to provide a high degree of wind and water resistance plus good durability. | Provide varying degrees of warmth, wind and water resistance; high tech fabrics usually demand a premium price. | Proprietary fabrics usually include varying percentages and types of polyester, nylon and spandex or lycra (providing stretch); popular for mountaineering, winter hiking and snow sports activities; often smooth finish outside and soft micropile on inside. |
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| **HARD FINISH WOOL** | | |
| Whipcord, gabardine, tweed and worsted wool | Durable; warmth, wind and water resistance varies with thickness and tightness of weave; much lower water absorbency than cotton, but much higher than synthetics; mostly a myth that warm when wet; long time to dry when wet; generally heavier than other options. | Typically military surplus; whipcord has a hard smooth finish with diagonal ribs; gabardine is smooth on one side and has a diagonally ribbed surface on the other. |
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| **COTTON DENIM JEANS** | | |
| Regular | Durable; comfortable except when wet; wicks water easily; long drying time in cool or cold conditions; questionable evaporative cooling | Even though a no-no among most experienced and serious hikers in mountainous regions, often preferred in lower elevations with moderate climates. |
| Lined | Warmer and heavier in weight than regular jeans. | Usually lined with cotton flannel or polyester fleece. |